



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 63.

NEW YORK. MARCH 14, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' LIVELY TIMES;

OR, HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE.

BY HARRY MOORE.



It was one of the most desperate battles the Liberty Boys had ever been engaged in. Stationed behind rocks half way up the slope, they did deadly work.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERIOUS MARKSMAN.

A party of redcoats was riding along a road leading toward Charleston, in South Carolina, one afternoon in August, of the year 1780.

That the party in question had been out on a foraging and pillaging expedition was plain to be seen, for their horses were loaded down with produce of all kinds, even to two or three live shoats, which, ever and anon, squealed most dismally. The redcoats were in a good humor, and laughed and talked as they rode along. Owing to the fact that they were well loaded down they could not travel rapidly—indeed, a walk seemed to be the limit of the speed at which the horses could travel.

Suddenly there came the sharp report of a rifle and one of the redcoats threw up his arms and fell from the saddle to the ground, giving utterance to a hollow groan which proved that he had received a serious and probably fatal wound.

Instantly the laughing and talking stopped. The redcoats' fun was brought to a sudden end. They quickly stopped their horses and eight or ten of their number leaped to the ground and ran toward the timber, going in the direction from which the shot had sounded.

"Kill the cowardly assassin!"

"Shoot him on sight!"

"No, let's capture him and string him up to a tree!"

"That's the talk; hang him!"

"Hang him! Hang him!"

Such were the cries of the redcoats as they ran toward the timber from the edge of which the shot had been fired.

Into the timber they rushed, and looking eagerly about them on every side, they dashed onward, spreading out like a fan so as to make sure of finding the person who had fired the shot.

They ran onward a distance of two hundred yards, at least, but saw nothing of anyone, and feeling that it would be useless to go farther, they reluctantly gave up the search and turned back to the road.

"Did you find him?" was the eager query, as they put in an appearance.

"No, we couldn't find hide nor hair of him," was the dissatisfied reply.

"I'm sorry for that," was the reply from the leader of the party, a captain, judging by his uniform. "Poor Dudley is dead, and I was in hopes that we would have the satisfaction of sending his murderer after him."

"What!"

"Poor Dudley dead, you say?"

"That is too bad!"

"Yes, he's dead. Whoever it was that fired the shot took good aim; he meant to kill."

Crack!

Again the rifle shot sounded and another one of the redcoats sank to the ground, with a hollow groan. Exclamations of amazement, anger and fear escaped the lips of the redcoats. They became greatly excited.

"He has killed Wilbur!" one cried.

"After the scoundrel, boys!"

"Yes, we'll catch him this time!"

"He must not escape!"

"He shall not!"

A dozen of the redcoats rushed to and into the timber, and spreading out as before they dashed forward, looking about them sharply and eagerly. They wished to catch sight of the person who had fired the two deadly shots, and if once they got sight of him they were sure they would be able to capture him.

But they did not get sight of him. They ran at least two hundred yards and then stopped, as in the former instance, for they had not got sight of any one, and felt that it would be useless to go farther. Their unknown and unseen enemy was too shrewd for them.

They made their way back to the road, fairly boiling over with rage, and reported their non-success. Their comrades were amazed and disappointed. "How did he manage to get away so quickly?" asked one.

"I don't know."

"Ask us something easy!"

"He was gone before we could get into the timber, and that's all there is about it."

"Who can he be?"

"He is a rebel, of course."

"Yes, he is undoubtedly a rebel, and a very bold one, too."

"And he has done some deadly work. Dudley and Wilbur are both dead."

"Too bad, too bad!"

"Well, we may as well get to work and bury the poor fellows," said Captain Thornley.

As he finished speaking there came another whip-like crack from the timber at the roadside and another of the redcoats uttered a wild cry of pain and fell to the ground.

"Thompson is down!" cried one. "This is terrible!"

"After the scoundrel!" roared Captain Thornley. "We must catch him, this time!"

Again the men dashed into the timber and ran onward, looking eagerly about them for some sign of their deadly foe, but nowhere did they see any one. They finally stopped and made their way slowly back to the road. When they reported their failure the captain was very angry and disappointed.

"Several of you boys go back into the timber and keep watch," he ordered; "Thompson is dead, and we must bury the three, and I see it will be necessary to have guards out while we are doing it, to keep more of us from suffering the same fate."

Several of the men hastened back into the timber, and, taking up their stations, remained on guard while their comrades were at work digging the graves for their dead friends.

They had not yet finished this when there came a sharp, whip-like crack, this time from the other side of the road, and another of the redcoats threw up his arms and pitched headfirst into the pit he had been helping dig.

This was terrible, the redcoats thought; and they uttered wild yells of rage and amazement, and a number dashed toward the timber on the side from which the last shot had come.

They dashed far into the timber, but seeing no sign of their mysterious enemy they gave up the search and returned to the road and reported. Captain Thornley was angry and disappointed; he was alarmed, too, as could be seen. He looked toward the timber, and it was evident that he was more than half-expecting to again hear the crack of the death-dealing rifle.

"Several of you go and stand guard on that side, too,"

he ordered; "this will never do! If the scoundrel keeps on at this rate we won't be able to bury the boys as fast as he kills them!"

The men hastened to obey the command, and then, with men posted on both sides of the road they felt fairly secure. They could not help glancing around in an uneasy fashion, however, and it was evident that they would be glad to get away from the spot.

"I wish we were safe in Charleston!" said one redcoat, with a gloomy look on his face.

"So do I!" from another; "I don't like this thing of being shot down by an unseen foe."

Several of the others spoke to the same effect, and then the captain said: "Don't talk so much and work more, boys, and we'll be through quicker and in shape to get away from here."

They obeyed his order and stopped talking, to work with greater vim and energy, and presently they finished the work of burying their comrades.

"Now, come along, boys!" called out the captain; "we will mount and get away from here in a hurry."

The men who had been on guard came running, and all mounted and started up the road, urging their horses to walk as rapidly as was possible. They had gone only a short distance, however, when the report of a rifle shot rang out, and another of their men fell forward, hard hit.

This was too much for the redcoats; they had tried to locate the wonderful marksman, but had been unable to even so much as get a sight of him, and they realized that if they moved along at the slow gait they were now traveling, they would be picked off, one by one, until there would be very few left to tell the tale.

"Throw away the plunder and we will get away from here in a hurry!" cried the captain, in tones of terror. "If we could see our enemy I should not care, but to be picked off in this fashion by some one whom you cannot see, and cannot locate—it is too horrible!"

The men hastened to obey this command, and quickly tossed the plunder, squealing pigs and all, to the ground, after which they put spurs to their horses and rode away at a gallop, two riding beside the wounded man and holding him on.

Hearing a shout, they looked back and saw a man standing in the middle of the road, waving his rifle in derision and shaking his fist in defiance.

"Come back, you cowards!" was the cry which they heard. "Come back! I can whip the whole gang of you, single-handed and alone!"

A curse escaped the lips of Captain Thornley. He com-

anded his men to halt, which they did. They turned in their saddles and looked back undecidedly.

"It was only one person, after all," said one.

"That's all; and he's a bold scoundrel, isn't he?"

"He certainly is!"

"He doesn't look to be very old."

"You are right; he looks like a young fellow."

"Well, he can shoot as good as any man I have ever seen!"

"I wish we could get hold of him!" said Captain Thorney in an eager tone of voice.

"So do I!" from one of the men. "I'd like to help string him up to a tree."

"Made you drop your plunder, didn't I?" came in the taunting voice of the strange youth—for he was nothing more, being not to exceed eighteen years of age. "Didn't make much by your cowardly thievery to-day, did you? Bah! you are the biggest sneaks and cowards I ever saw! If King George can't find better and braver men than you fellows to send over here, he might as well give up beaten, first as last!"

The redcoats glared up the road in the direction of the bold speaker, with looks of rage. It was evident that if they could have gotten hands on the youth it would have gone hard with him. Indeed, they would have hanged him without ceremony.

"Are you coming?" taunted the solitary individual. "But, of course, you aren't! You are too big cowards to attack even one patriot! Go on back to Charleston, where you will be safe, and take my advice and stay there. It isn't healthy up in this part of the country for you fellows!"

"Say, this is hard to endure!" growled one of the men. "Let's go for him, captain!"

"But if we start back he will dart into the timber and then he will shoot one of us dead and flee, and there we will be. I don't think we had better bother with him. He just wants to get us to do so."

"Let's ride toward him and see what he does, anyway," suggested one of the men.

"Well, we can do that," the captain agreed; "but if he darts into the timber, as I am confident he will do, we must stop instantly and beat a retreat, for he will pick one of us off with that long rifle of his if we don't."

Then they turned their horses and started back toward the youth standing so boldly in the road. "Oh, coming, after all, are you?" the youth called out. "Well, well! I didn't think you were brave enough to do that. However,

I am glad of it, and will do my best to make things interesting for you."

As he finished speaking he suddenly dropped on one knee, extended the long rifle in the direction of the approaching redcoats, and, resting his left elbow on his knee, took careful aim. The redcoats observed this manoeuvre and promptly halted.

"It means death for one of us if we go any nearer," the captain said; "I guess we had better let this fiend alone and go on to Charleston."

"Oh, come on!" cried the youth, tauntingly. "Why are you stopping? I never saw such a gang of cowards in all my life!"

"Say, I'd like to get my fingers on that fellow!" growled one of the men.

"And I!" from another. "He is certainly the sauciest rebel I have ever seen!"

The others nodded assent to this statement. The captain spoke up, however, and said: "I don't think it would be wise for us to try to capture that fellow. He is undoubtedly a resident of this neighborhood, and knows every foot of the country round about, and could easily give us the slip. He has already killed four of the boys, and given another what may prove to be a death-wound, and I think we had better go straight on to Charleston."

"Yes, yes!" groaned the wounded man. "Let us go. Don't fool away any more time with that fellow; for if you do he will end the days of some more of the boys."

The captain was of the same opinion, and he was on the point of giving the order to turn around and start in the direction of Charleston when the youth who had done them so much damage, and who had dared them and talked to them so defiantly, was seen to suddenly drop his rifle and fall over in the road, and go to kicking around at a great rate. The redcoats stared for a few moments, in open-mouthed amazement, and then one cried:

"He's got a fit, or something! Come on; we can get him now!"

"Forward!" cried the captain, and then the redcoats, with the exception of the wounded man, put spurs to their horses and dashed toward their intended victim.

CHAPTER II.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" ON HAND.

They were to be treated to a surprise, however. When they were within fifty yards of the youth he suddenly ceased

struggling, and, leaping to his feet, seized his rifle and taking quick aim, fired. Crack! the report rang out, and one of the redcoats gave utterance to a shrill cry of pain and fell forward on his horse's neck.

Wild yells went up from the redcoats and they drew their pistols with the intention of firing a volley at the bold youth who had, as they were now certain, played a shrewd trick on them to get them in range.

But the youth who was shrewd enough to play such a trick was also shrewd enough not to remain out in the road where he would be a mark for the enemy, and the instant he fired he bounded toward the timber and disappeared into it just as the redcoats got their pistols out. They fired a volley in the hope that they might bring the youth down, but they failed. At any rate he did not stop, but kept right on going and was out of sight in an instant.

To say that the redcoats were angry and disgusted is stating the case very mildly indeed. They were almost wild with rage; but they realized that they could do nothing. If they were to try to catch the youth they would only fail, as he knew the lay of the land while they did not. Obviously, the only thing for them to do was to get away from the neighborhood as speedily as possible.

The man who had been hit by the bullet from the youth's rifle was seriously, though not necessarily fatally wounded, and with the two wounded men on their hands it was desirable that they get to the city as quickly as possible.

"But we'll come back to this region," the captain declared; "I am determined to find out who the fellow is who did this work, and he shall be made suffer for it!"

The party of redcoats made its way up the road in the direction of Charleston, and after an hour's ride reached there and went to its quarters. The captain gave instructions for taking care of the two wounded men, and then went to headquarters and made his report.

"And you say that one man—or youth, rather—killed four of your men and seriously wounded two more and forced you to throw away the provisions and plunder you had obtained and flee?" asked the commander, in scathing tones.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "I have told you just how it was. If we had stayed longer more of us would have lost our lives."

"But this is intolerable!" fumed the commander. "To think that a mere boy should defy and practically put to flight a party of British soldiers to the number of twenty! I never heard of such a thing in my life!"

"Nor I," was the reply; "I wouldn't have believed myself, that such a thing could be. But he did it, and I

feel that we were fortunate in stopping when we did at returning to the city."

But the commander was angry, and the more he thought of it the angrier he got. "By Jove! but this outrage has got to be paid for!" he growled. "It was about three miles from the city, you say?"

"Yes, sir; not more than four, anyway."

"What do you think—are the people of that vicinity mostly Tories, or are the majority of them Whigs?"

"I could not say; but we have some Tories here who can tell us all about it. I have one in my company who used to live out in that part of the country, I think."

"Very well; have him come here at once."

Word was sent to the Tory, and when he put in an appearance the commander asked him a number of questions and elicited from him the information that there were quite a good many Whig families out in the neighborhood in question.

"Very well; they must be cotched!" the commander declared. "That youth who did the shooting to-day undoubtedly belongs to one of those families, and by making a clean sweep of the Whigs of that vicinity we will get at him. Captain Thornley, take fifty men and return to the neighborhood at once and begin work. Burn the home of every Whig, and if you get your hands on the young scoundrel who did the shooting to-day, string him up!"

"All right; I will do so."

Captain Thornley and the Tory left headquarters and returned to their own quarters. The captain at once selected fifty men and told them to be ready for the road in half an hour. They said they would, and at once began making preparations. At the end of the specified time the fifty were ready, and, mounting their horses, rode away, the captain at their head.

After being fired upon by the redcoats, the youth who had done such deadly work in the ranks of the redcoats and who had just played such a shrewd trick on them, kept on running for a few minutes and then he paused and listened. At first he could hear nothing, but presently he heard the sound of hoofbeats, and after listening to the sound for a few moments he nodded and smiled.

"They are going away," he murmured; "I guess they have got all they want, at last, and are going to go on to the city. Well, I guess it would be impossible to trick them into returning a second time, so I won't try. Anyway, I've done well enough this afternoon, and I rather think I have got even with them for taking our grain and pigs. They had to drop their plunder, too, and we can come and get it again."

The youth, who was a handsome fellow of about eighteen years, listened a few moments to assure himself that he was not wrong about the redcoats going, and then he made his way back to the road.

The British soldiers had disappeared, having got around a bend a quarter of a mile distant. The youth glanced in that direction, saw that the enemy was gone, and then walked down the road in the opposite direction. There was a bend in this direction also and it was just around the bend that the redcoats had thrown away their plunder, in the way of grain, provisions, pigs, etc. When the youth rounded the bend and came in sight of the spot where the plunder had been dumped down in the road, he stopped short and an exclamation escaped him: "Great guns! who are them fellows?"

At the spot for which he was headed was a party consisting of at least one hundred men—or, more properly speaking, youths of from eighteen to twenty-one years of age. They had evidently just reached the spot and had stopped to take a look at the provisions and other plunder which littered the road. One of the strangers caught sight of the youth, and motioned to him to approach, at the same time calling out: "This way, my friend. Come here and explain this affair. Are provisions so plentiful in this part of the country that the people strew them along the road for the accommodation of travelers?"

The last part of the address was spoken as the youth approached, and the questioner laughed and motioned toward the articles lying scattered about.

The youth eyed the strangers closely as he approached, his long-barreled rifle held in the hollow of his arm. "They are not redcoats," he said to himself, "and I don't think they are patriots—at any rate, they have on no uniforms. They don't look like Tories. I wonder who and what they are." Aloud he said: "Well, provisions are not any too plentiful. They are not as plentiful as they used to be before the redcoats took up their abode in Charleston."

The youth looked at the strangers sharply as he said this. He had said it on purpose, in the hope that by doing so he might draw the strangers out and learn who and what they were—or, at least, whether or not they were patriots.

The one who had first addressed him, a handsome, blue-eyed, brown-haired youth, with a bronzed and healthy-looking face, gave his companions a quick look and then said: "I take it that you do not like the redcoats."

"I don't believe you fellows do, either," was the prompt and ready reply.

"What makes you think so?" with a smile

"Well, you don't look like either redcoats or Tories, and so I think you must be patriots. Am I right?"

"Why don't we look like redcoats or Tories?"

"Well, you look too honest-like and manly to be either the one or the other. I'll bet you are patriots!"

The youths laughed, and the one who had done the talking said: "Thanks for the compliment. You are possessed of pretty good discrimination or else you are flattering us."

"Then you are patriots, sure enough!" There was unmistakable delight in the youth's tone, and the other replied:

"You are right, my boy. We are patriots, sure enough. But who are you? What is your name?"

"My name is Harry Ford."

"Harry Ford, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you are a patriot?"

"I am!" The youth unconsciously straightened up and there was a proud ring to his voice. The other youth, who seemed to be the commander of the party, looked at his comrades approvingly and they nodded their heads in approval.

"That's the way to say it, Harry!" the young man said. "You are evidently proud that you are a patriot."

"I am! I am proud to say that I am a patriot, and I am proud to say that I am ready to fight for my independence and for the independence and liberty of my friends and relatives at any time or place."

"Give me your hand, Harry Ford!" said the young man, stepping forward and extending his own hand. "I am glad to know you. My name is Dick Slater and these comrades of mine are 'The Liberty Boys '76.'"

Harry Ford gave utterance to an exclamation. "You don't mean it!" he almost gasped. "You don't mean to tell me that you are Dick Slater, the great scout, spy and the captain of the 'Liberty Boys'!"

Dick Slater—for he it was, as he had said—smiled as he shook the youth's hand and said: "Yes, I am Dick Slater; but I don't understand how you ever heard of me, away down here in South Carolina."

"Oh, we've heard of you many, many times!" Harry said. "Indeed?"

"Yes; and we've heard the most wonderful stories of your doings and of the doings of your 'Liberty Boys.' Oh, I'm so glad to have it to say that I have seen you! Why, do you know, Mr. Slater, I have taken you as my model and have been trying to do as I thought you would do under the same circumstances?"

"No; is that a fact?" with a smile.

"Yes, sir, it is!"

"And have you done any damage to the enemy since doing so, Harry?"

The youth smiled and his eyes shone as he pointed down road, where a pile of freshly-stirred dirt could be seen. "Do you see that pile of dirt?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Dick, "we noticed that. It looks like a newly made grave."

Harry nodded. "That's what it is," he said, quietly. "There are four redcoats in there."

"Four redcoats!"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I saw the others bury them."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"Who killed the four redcoats?"

"I did."

Harry said this without any great show of bravado, though it was evident that he was somewhat proud of his achievement.

Dick and his comrades were astonished, and they stared at the youth in amazement. "You say you killed them?" queried Dick, presently.

"Yes."

"But—surely not all by yourself! Who helped you?"

"Nobody; I did it alone."

"You don't really mean to say that you killed four redcoats alone and unaided, and that you are here alive and uninjured to tell of it?"

Harry nodded. "Yes," he said, "I mean to say that very thing—and I wounded two more, too. I doubt if either of them will get well."

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" stared at this cool youth in undisguised amazement, and then Bob Estabrook spoke up: "I vote that we make this young man a member of the company of 'Liberty Boys,' Dick! He certainly has the right kind of material in him for our needs."

"That's right!" was the chorus.

Harry's face flushed with pleasure. "I should be delighted to become a member of your band," he said, earnestly; "that is, so long as you are in this part of the country, at least."

"But explain how it happens that you were able to kill four redcoats and wound two more and yet escape uninjured?" said Dick, who was greatly interested.

Harry grinned. "It was easy enough," he said; "I just stayed in the edge of the timber and kept pegging them over. Each time they came running into the timber to try

to find me, but I climbed a tree and they didn't see anything of me and finally they saw they were all going to get killed if they went no faster than their horses could walk, and they threw all this plunder away and started to get away from here in a hurry."

A cheer went up from the "Liberty Boys." "Great guns! but you are all right, Harry Ford!" cried Bob Estabrook; "put a whole gang of redcoats to flight! Well, that does beat anything I've heard of lately!"

"How many of them were there?" asked Dick.

"About twenty."

"Twenty, eh? Why didn't they try to hunt you down after they had thrown their plunder away, I wonder?"

"They were afraid, I guess. I had hard work to toll them back so as to get another shot at them."

"Had hard work to toll them back?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you see, when they threw this stuff away and started up the road at a gallop, I saw that I wasn't going to get any more chances at them without playing some kind of a trick, so I ran out into the middle of the road and yelled at them."

"You did!" The "Liberty Boys" were looking at the youth in undisguised admiration.

"Yes."

"What did they do?"

"They stopped."

"And came back?"

"No; at least not right away. They looked at me and talked among themselves for a while, and then presently they started ahead again."

"Ah! They had made up their minds that they didn't care to have anything more to do with you."

"You are right. I saw they were going on, so before they had all got started—only those in front having got started—I fell down in the road and pretended to have a fit."

The "Liberty Boys" roared with laughter. This struck them as being one of the funniest things they had ever heard of.

"Pretended to have a fit!"

"Oh, say, Harry, you are all right!"

"You are, for a fact!"

"What did the redcoats do?"

"Did they come back?"

"Not right away. They sat there and looked at me, while I rolled and kicked around, and then after a little while they decided it would be safe, and came riding toward me."

waited till they were within good rifle-shot distance and then I jumped up, grabbed my rifle, took aim and fired."

"Good for you!"

"Did you get your man?"

"I wounded one pretty bad, I think. He was able to hang onto his horse, but he was hard hit. Then I ran into the timber and got out of the way."

"Didn't they fire on you?" asked Dick.

"Yes; but they didn't come anyway near me."

"And you escaped, scot free?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're a wonder!"

The others made remarks to the same effect, and Harry blushed with embarrassment and pleasure. Presently Dick asked Harry if he lived near there.

"I live about a mile down the road," he replied.

"And you say the redcoats have been doing a good deal of damage in this part of the country?"

"Quite a good deal."

"Very well; I think we will have to remain here a few days. You see, we are down here on a sort of roving commission. We were instructed to come down into this part of the country and do all we could to protect the patriot people, and if the redcoats have been doing damage here we may as well do a little work in this vicinity as not."

"That's right; come on down to where I live. There is a nice place to camp, there, and mother and sister will be glad to do your cooking for you while you are there."

This appealed to the youths, and they decided to adopt the youth's suggestion.

"We will gather up these provisions and things," said Dick; "such as we can find the owners for we will return, and the rest we will make use of ourselves."

"You might as well keep it all," said Harry; "most of it came from my home, and you are welcome to it. The redcoats had taken it, anyway, you know."

"Yes, but you had made them drop it again."

The "Liberty Boys" gathered up all the grain and provisions and loaded them on their horses, and then, mounting, rode back down the road, led by Harry Ford, on foot.

They soon reached the Ford home and found the parents and sister of Harry somewhat anxious about that youth. "We heard firing up the road," said his mother, "and feared you might have got into trouble with the redcoats."

"They got into trouble with me, mother," Harry replied, with a wink at the "Liberty Boys," and they could not help laughing.

"What do you mean, Harry?" asked his sister Amy.

"Oh, nothing in particular."

But the girl was eager and suspicious, and she pressed her brother for information, and he finally told his folks just what had taken place. They were surprised and told him he should not have been so reckless.

"It is a great wonder you did not lose your own life, Harry!" his mother said.

"Oh, I wasn't in any particular danger!" was the careless reply.

Harry's parents and sister made the "Liberty Boys" welcome, and the youth showed them a splendid place to camp—in a vacant lot just beyond the house.

When the youths had gone into camp Dick, who had been doing something, told them that he believed they would have some work to do before nightfall.

"What makes you think so, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Well, I'll tell you: You see, Harry Ford killed four redcoats and wounded two more, and they will be very angry and will want revenge. I think they will come back here with a stronger force and try to find him, and that they will do considerable damage to the patriot people of the vicinity—or would have done considerable damage, rather, had we not got here."

"But we will see to it that they don't do much damage now, eh, Dick?" from Bob.

"Yes; and I want a couple of you boys to go back up the road and keep watch for the coming of the redcoats. I am sure they will come, and doubtless they will put in an appearance before dark, as it is not far to Charleston, and they will likely start back right away."

Two of the "Liberty Boys" took their departure and made their way up the road a distance of three-quarters of a mile, where they concealed themselves in the edge of the timber at a point where they could look up the road for a mile and see anyone coming.

Two hours later one of them came running into the encampment near the Ford house and told Dick that a party of redcoats was coming.

CHAPTER III.

THE EARTHQUAKE.

"Is it a large party?" asked Dick.

"Not so very, Dick," was the reply. "I don't believe there are more than sixty or seventy of the redcoats."

"Oh, well, we will make short work of them," said Dick; "come, boys!"

The youths followed him, and the party made its way up the road, being joined by the other scout at a point half a mile distant from the house.

Dick decided that here was as good a place as any for the encounter, and he posted his men along the edge of the timber and gave them their instructions. "Wait till the party of redcoats is exactly opposite us," he said, "and then take good aim and I will give the word for you to fire. Then let them have it; and if you can do so, drop every one of them. We must put a stop to the high-handed work of the British in this vicinity."

Presently the party of redcoats came in sight around the bend in the road a quarter of a mile distant, and came riding along at a moderate pace. The troopers were talking and laughing, and some were boasting of what they had done in the past and what they would do in the future, and all were utterly unsuspecting of the fate that was in store for them.

The "Liberty Boys" waited till the redcoats were exactly opposite them, and then just as they were taking aim, and Dick was on the point of giving the order to fire, there was a sudden rumbling, a muffled, roaring sound; the earth began trembling, and this grew steadily until it quaked and shook at a terrible rate. Then there was the sound of tearing and cracking, and the earth parted at several points near at hand and great fissures three and four feet wide and hundreds of feet deep appeared as if by magic!

One large fissure opened right under the feet of the horses ridden by the redcoats, and several of the animals, with their riders, went down, horrible shrieks coming up from the lips of the doomed men as they went down into the terrible depths. The redcoats who had not gone down, shrieked aloud in terror, and their horses whinnied and snorted, and pranced about as best they could—for the earth shook and trembled at such a rate that they could hardly keep on their feet.

It was an earthquake, and a severe one, too, and the "Liberty Boys" did not fire the volley as they had intended. Instead they lowered their muskets, and, leaping to their feet, seized hold of the trees and held on with all their might. They did not know but they might find themselves going down into a fissure as the ill-fated troopers had done, but such was not to be their fate, and presently they fancied the tremblings and quakings of the earth were not so severe, and breathed more freely.

They watched the troopers with eager interest, however, and saw another horse and rider, and still another, go down into the fissure, the frightened horses plunging around and falling in. The redcoats were almost paralyzed by fear, but

at last the earthquake spent its fury and the ground ceased shaking and trembling and the troopers lost no time in getting away from the spot. They turned their horseheads toward Charleston and rode as if the Old Nick was after them. Their nerves had received such a shock that they did not have energy or courage sufficient to enable them to go ahead with the errand which had brought them to the neighborhood.

Then the "Liberty Boys" came forth from the timber and took a look at the situation. It was a terrible scene! The great fissures yawned before them, and a glance down into their depths was almost enough to cause a shudder of horror.

The youths looked down into the one into which the troopers had fallen, and away down in the depths, seemingly half a mile distant, they could make out dark forms of horses and troopers.

"Doesn't this beat anything you ever heard of, though?" exclaimed Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, it is terrible!" agreed Dick.

"How many of the redcoats went down, do you think?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I think that five went down," said Dick; "I counted five, but I may have missed one or two. I was somewhat flustered, I will acknowledge, and was not in good condition to count just as accurately as I might otherwise have done."

"I think you are right about the number, Dick," said Bob, who had been peering down into the opening; "I can make out five dark objects down there, which are undoubtedly the bodies of the horses. I can see only three small objects, but there must be two more somewhere there."

"I have no doubt you are right, Bob. The riders went down with the horses."

"It is a terrible affair," said Sam Sanderson; "but take it all in all, it was a most fortunate happening for the redcoats, for if we had fired that volley more than five of them would have gone down."

"That is undoubtedly true," agreed Dick. "It was lucky for them—though doubtless they do not think so."

"Let's hasten back to the house," said Harry Ford; "I'm anxious to find out whether or not much damage was done there."

"We may as well go at once," agreed Dick; "there is nothing further to be done here."

They returned to the house and found, to their surprise, that no great amount of damage had been done there. Part of the stone chimney on the outside of the house had been shaken down, but that was about all, and it was evi-

ident that the earthquake had not been so severe here as at the point where the "Liberty Boys" had been. There were some fissures in the ground, but they were only a few inches in width and not very deep. When the youths told Mr. and Mrs. Ford and Amy that where they had been there were fissures four and five feet in width and hundreds of feet deep, they could hardly believe it; and as it was not yet dark they went to take a look at the wonderful sight.

When they returned there was a subdued and wondering look on their faces. "It beats anything I ever heard of!" said Mrs. Ford.

Mr. Ford and Amy said the same. "We saw the horses and troopers lying away down there," said Amy, with a shudder. "Ugh! it was awful!"

The redcoats were a badly frightened lot of men, and they rode at a swift gallop till they reached Charleston. The shock had been felt in the city, but only slightly, and when the troopers told their story it was scarcely credited. The commander of the British forces was doubtful and angry. He talked rather roughly to Captain Thornley, but the captain insisted that he was telling only the truth.

"Five of my men are lying dead at the bottom of one of those terrible fissures!" he declared, and then the commander began to understand that there was something in the affair.

"I must see that for myself," he said, "and I will take the officers and a bodyguard and go and take a look."

The order was given at once for horses for the officers and a bodyguard, and thirty minutes later the party was on the way to the scene of the earthquake disaster. It was long past sundown when the party got there, but the moon was shining brightly and they could see almost as plainly as if it had been broad daylight.

The officers and men took a look down into the terrible opening down which the troopers and their horses had gone, but could not see to the bottom. At last they were ready to start back to Charleston, and just as the word had been given to start there came the rattle of musketry, and a hail of bullets came rattling among them with terrible effect, for a dozen of the troopers went down. Then on the night air rose the cry:

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE "SWAMP FOX" APPEARS.

The attack on the British was by the "Liberty Boys," of course, and is easily explained. Dick had sent out a couple of scouts, as he more than half suspected that

some of the British would come, either to view the scene of the earthquake disaster or to again make an attempt to find the youth who had killed four of their men and wounded two others, and so he was not greatly surprised when one of the scouts came in and told him the redcoats were coming.

He at once told the youths to follow him, and they were soon at the scene of the earthquake disaster. They took up their stations behind trees in the edge of the timber and there they had waited till the redcoats had taken a look down into the opening in the earth and were on the point of starting back. Then Dick had given the order to fire, and the "Liberty Boys" had done so, as stated.

Dick's reason for waiting till the redcoats were about to start on their return to Charleston before ordering the youths to fire was very simple. There were at least two hundred of the British, and he thought that it would be wise to wait till they were headed for home before firing, and then they would be much more likely to take refuge in flight than to show fight, and in this he was wise, for the enemy outnumbered the "Liberty Boys" two to one, and had they shown fight, as they would have done had they been attacked sooner, they would undoubtedly have been able to kill a number of the youths. This Dick did not wish to happen. He would always rather kill fewer of the enemy and lose no lives on his own side than to kill more of the enemy and lose a number of his own men.

And this was the way it worked. The British were so startled by the sudden and unexpected attack that they did not think of trying to stand their ground and fight. Their horses were headed up the road in the direction of Charleston, and it was so much easier to put spurs to them and let them go in that direction as fast as they could. Then, too, the animals were more than willing to go.

There was still another reason why this course was adopted. The British commander and his officers were in the party, and it would not do to run the risk of them being killed or captured. The result was that the "Liberty Boys" were quickly left masters of the situation and the British were galloping wildly up the road in the direction of Charleston.

When they had gone perhaps a mile, however, the commander called a halt. "I wonder what force that could have been?" he remarked, questioningly.

None of the officers could offer an answer that was at all reasonable, and after considerable discussion the commander ordered that one hundred and fifty of the troopers go back and investigate, and, if possible, strike the enemy a blow in return for the one they had received.

Captain Thornley was placed in command of this force, and, turning about, they started back. They were not very eager for the work, for they did not know how strong a force they might encounter; then, too, they were afraid they might again be ambushed. The commander and his officers and the rest of the troopers rode on toward Charleston.

Captain Thornley and his men rode back only about half a mile, and then they stopped and held a council of war. "I don't want to run into an ambush and get a lot of you boys killed," he said, "so I think I had better send scouts ahead and move forward only when I receive word that the way is clear."

The men thought this a wise plan, and the captain detailed four of the men as scouts, and they dismounted, and, entering the timber at the sides of the road, disappeared. The troopers dismounted, and, seating themselves, waited for the return of some one of the scouts before advancing farther.

The scouts were gone perhaps three-quarters of an hour, and then came running back in hot haste, with the information that two strong bodies of "rebels" were coming up the road. "There are at least two hundred on foot coming up this way through the timber!" they declared; "and there are a hundred or more on horseback coming up the road! We had better get away from here in a hurry!"

"Yes, or else get into the timber and make a stand," said another.

At this instant the sound of horses galloping came to their hearing, and this decided them. "To saddle!" cried the captain; "we can't be expected to make a stand against twice our number. We will retreat toward Charleston."

They leaped into the saddles and rode up the road at a gallop, and behind them came the enemy. Closer and closer came the pursuers, and the redcoats put spurs to their horses and rode at top speed.

The pursuing force was well-mounted, however, and drew steadily nearer. At last they were within musket-shot distance, they thought, and they fired a volley. None of the redcoats were killed, but two or three were wounded. Then they whipped and spurred their horses to renewed exertions and managed to keep out of pistol-shot range.

Their pursuers kept after them, however, almost till the edge of the city was reached before giving up the chase. Then they stopped and turned back.

The daring pursuers were no others than the famous men who comprised the band under General Marion, the "Swamp Fox." They had happened along soon after the

"Liberty Boys" put the redcoats to flight, and Dick had told Marion what they had done, and he and his men had started up the road in the direction taken by the redcoats, with the intention of seeing whether or not they went clear on to Charleston. They had caught sight of the party of troopers and had given chase, and the fact that they were fewer in number than those whom they were chasing did not make any difference to them. They considered themselves to be more than a match for double their number, any time.

They rode back and rejoined the party of "Liberty Boys," who had put in the time while the "Swamp Fox" was gone in burying the dead redcoats and taking care of the wounded, of whom there were four.

"Did you catch them?" asked Dick, as the "Swamp Fox" and his men rode up.

"We got within musket-shot distance of them," was the reply; "we gave them one volley, and while we did not drop any of them from their saddles I am confident we wounded several."

The four wounded redcoats were carried to the home of the Fords and were placed in a spare room. "I will send a messenger to Charleston to-morrow," said Dick, "telling them to send for the wounded men. We have no use for prisoners, and certainly do not care to be bothered with wounded ones."

"Very well," said Mr. Ford; "we will take as good care of them as possible till their friends send for them."

The "Swamp Fox" and his men remained at the "Liberty Boys'" encampment that night, and in the morning, before going away, General Marion called Dick to one side and had a conversation with him.

"I am on my way up north a ways," he said; "I understand that General Gates is coming down with the intention of attacking Cornwallis, who is at Camden with quite a large force, and I wish to offer the general the services of myself and men."

"That is a good idea," said Dick, approvingly.

"I think so; you had better come and go up there with us."

"I won't go now; but I shall come as soon as possible. You see, I apprehend trouble for the patriots of this neighborhood soon, and I think I had better stay here and see them through it before going anywhere else."

"That isn't a bad idea."

"That is what I think. I and my men were sent down here to make ourselves generally useful. We were instructed to go here, there and everywhere and make things as lively for the redcoats as possible, and so as I fancied

there will be lively times around here at an early date, I shall remain a few days."

"Perhaps I had better remain also. There are a lot of redcoats in Charleston, and they will make things too warm for you, if they take the notion, don't you think?"

"Oh, I hardly think we will need any assistance in taking care of them," was Dick's reply; "we are exceedingly lively fellows, you know, and are quick to get around and out of danger's way. I shall keep scouts constantly out, and when a party of redcoats comes out this way I will know it in time to prepare a reception for them."

"Well, if you think you can handle affairs here without help, all right. I will go on, then, as I had intended doing."

"Yes, that will be best. General Gates needs the help of men who are familiar with the country, and who know how to fight the redcoats as they should be fought."

So Marion and his men rode away, soon afterward, and left the "Liberty Boys" to look after the safety of the patriot families of the vicinity.

CHAPTER V.

LIVELY TIMES.

That afternoon, at a point a mile and a half from the home of the Fords, and just that distance farther from Charleston, a beautiful girl of about eighteen years was picking blackberries in the edge of the timber bordering the road. There was no fence, and nothing to interfere with the girl's view of the road, and presently she thought she heard voices and looked up, to see a party of redcoats coming down the road. There were, so she judged, at least two hundred men in the party, and they were yet a couple of hundred yards distant. Believing that she had not been seen, and not desiring to attract the attention of the troopers, the girl stepped behind a tree, and, thus concealed, was enabled to see the men as they came along.

To the girl's dismay the troopers paused right opposite where she was concealed, and entered into a lively discussion. She listened, and being close enough so that she could understand what was said, her dismay soon gave way to a feeling of horror. She learned that this party of redcoats was on its way to try to surprise the party of youths who were encamped near the home of the Fords, and whom she knew to be "The Liberty Boys of '76."

The news that the famous "Liberty Boys" were in that

part of the country had traveled rapidly, and was known for miles around. Of course, the patriot families were glad to know that they had such champions near at hand, but the Tory families were not so well pleased, and one of the men had hastened to Charleston with the information regarding the identity of the youths, the information being gladly received by the commander.

He at once decided that such dangerous "rebels" must be either killed or driven away from the neighborhood, and he had ordered the party to leave that very afternoon under the guidance of the Tory, and that it go a roundabout course so as to approach the "Liberty Boys" from the rear, and thus take them by surprise. The commander reasoned that the youths would not be looking for danger from that direction.

"They will keep scouts out, on the side toward Charleston," he said; "but I don't think they will be watching in the other direction."

So the party, guided by the Tory, had made a wide circuit, and was now within a mile and a half of its intended victims. The girl listened, intently, and then stole away through the timber. She had gone but a short distance when she heard a shout:

"Hello! Hold on, there!"

One of the troopers had caught a glimpse of the girl and had told Captain Thornley, who shouted out the command.

But the girl had no intention of stopping. Instead of doing so she increased her gait to a run and flitted through the timber with the speed of a frightened fawn.

"The redcoats are going to attack the 'Liberty Boys'!" was the thought that was flashing through her mind; "and Harry is with them! I must get there and give them warning. I must! The troopers are on horseback, but they have to go a mile and a half while I will have only about half as far to go by cutting through the timber. I will have to run every step of the way, though!"

Setting her teeth together the girl ran onward. She was a healthy, agile country maiden, and was used to work and exercise, so it was possible for her to do what many girls could not do—run nearly a mile.

She kept on running, and with hair streaming out behind her, with her cheeks red, her lips parted, and her breath coming in gasps, the girl burst out from among the trees and in another moment was in the midst of the encampment of the "Liberty Boys," many of whom leaped to their feet and stared at the beautiful vision in amazement.

"Why, it's Gertie!" exclaimed Harry Ford, leaping for-

ward, and, in spite of the presence of all the youths, seizing her in his arms, kissed her. "Gertie Elmore, what are you doing here, and why have you dashed in here in this fashion and given us such a start?"

"The redcoats are coming, Harry!" cried the girl. "They are almost here, I am sure, and they are coming from that direction!" pointing in an opposite direction from that in which lay Charleston, and from whence the "Liberty Boys" naturally looked for an enemy.

"To arms, boys, and take up a position yonder in the edge of the timber!" Dick cried. "How many are there of them, miss?" he asked the girl.

"About two hundred, I should say—but yonder they come!" pointing down the road.

She was right. Around a bend in the road a quarter of a mile distant had dashed a party of British troopers. They were coming at a run and were doubtless confident that they would take the "Liberty Boys" by surprise.

But thanks to Gertrude Elmore they had failed in this. The "Liberty Boys" had hastened to obey Dick's order, and had taken their places behind the trees by the roadside before the redcoats reached there, and when the troopers came within range they opened fire.

Several of the redcoats fell to the ground and the party came to an abrupt stop. They were the ones surprised and not the "Liberty Boys." Yells and curses went up from them, and Captain Thornley ordered them to dismount and charge.

"We outnumber them two to one, and can whip them easily enough!" he roared. "At them, men! Charge! and cut them down without mercy!"

The troopers rushed toward the trees, behind which their enemies had taken refuge, only to be met by a galling fire from the youths' pistols. At such short range the small arms were as deadly as the muskets, and a score of the redcoats went down.

Again and again the volleys rang out, for the "Liberty Boys" carried four pistols apiece, and could fire rapidly and repeatedly. The British soldiers were as brave as any in their army, but this was rather more than they had bargained for, and they faltered and then paused and stood hesitating.

Dick seized upon this moment. "Charge them, 'Liberty Boys'!" he cried. "Kill the scoundrels!"

Instantly out from behind the trees leaped the youths and they were upon the almost demoralized redcoats in an instant. They held their muskets, with bayonets, straight in front of them and the British troopers were given a dose of their own medicine in a way they did not like. They

fired one scattering volley and then ran back to where their horses stood, and, leaping into the saddles, rode away at full gallop, using whip and spurs to urge the animals on to greater speed.

The enemy was completely routed. Sixty-four of their number had been killed and wounded, and five of the "Liberty Boys" were wounded, none having been killed. It was a great victory. Naturally the youths were jubilant, and they cheered at the tops of their voices. The redcoats heard the cheering and rode all the faster.

They did not slacken speed until after they had gone nearly a mile, and then brought their horses down to a walk and talked of the encounter.

"They seemed to be waiting for us," said Captain Thornley.

"Yes," from one of the troopers; "we certainly did not surprise them."

"I wonder how they knew we were coming?"

"I'll tell you," said another: "You remember the girl we saw in the timber? Likely she hurried there and told them we were coming."

"But we were on horseback, while she was on foot. How could she have beaten us there?"

"Well, she cut across through the timber, while we had to follow the road and had twice as far to go."

Captain Thornley nodded. "There may be something in that," he admitted; "well, we got the worst of it, anyway, and I don't know what will happen to me when I return to Charleston and report this to the commander."

"You weren't to blame, captain."

"I know that; but he won't believe it."

"Hello! yonder comes some one behind us!" exclaimed one of the men in the rear. "He is waving a white flag. He wants to say something to us, I guess."

"Halt!" called out the captain, and the party came to a stop.

The approaching rider was soon close to the redcoats, and pausing he called out: "I have been sent by Dick Slater, the commander of 'The Liberty Boys of '76' to tell you that you are at liberty to return and bury your dead and remove your wounded."

"And we will not be fired upon?" asked Captain Thornley.

"No."

"Very well; we will return and attend to the matter."

"Good; I will go back and carry the word to my commander."

The youth whirled his horse and rode back at a gallop,

while the troopers turned and made their way in the same direction, but at a moderate gait.

"Do you suppose there is any trick in this business?" asked one of the troopers, suspiciously.

Captain Thornley shook his head. "No," he said, "I am not at all afraid of that. Didn't you hear what he said—they are 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"Yes, I heard that. But who are the 'Liberty Boys,' as they call themselves?"

"Haven't you ever heard of them?"

"No."

"Well, I have, and frequently. They have operated in the North almost exclusively and have made themselves famous by their wonderful daring and fierce fighting. They have a splendid reputation, too, for magnanimity and honesty, and it is said that whatever they say may be depended upon. That is the reason I was so willing to go back. I am confident that we shall be in no danger whatever."

"I hope not!"

The troopers presently reached the spot where the encounter had taken place and found that a number of the most severely wounded men had been looked after and their wounds had been dressed.

"They did it," said one of the wounded men, feebly; "they are fine fellows, even though they are rebels. They have been doing everything they could for us."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that."

Captain Thornley set a lot of the men to work, digging graves, and some more were sent to the homes of nearby Tories, to borrow teams and wagons for use in conveying the wounded soldiers to Charleston. Two hours later the work of burying their comrades had been finished, and the wounded men were in the wagons and the party ready to start. Captain Thornley approached Dick Slater, and, saluting, said:

"I am much obliged for your kindness in doing what you did for our wounded men and for permitting us to return and take them away. I appreciate it, I assure you."

"That is all right, sir," said Dick, pleasantly; "don't mention it. I am only sorry that it was necessary for us to kill and wound your men as we did. Still I do not think we are to blame."

"Oh, that is the fortunes of war," was the reply; "we are not grumbling on that score."

Then the redcoats took their departure. As they disappeared around a bend in the road, Harry Ford threw his arms around Gertie Elmore and gave her a hug and a kiss. "Gertie, you made it possible for us to get the better of

the redcoats!" he said. "You are the best girl in South Carolina!"

Gertie was Harry's sweetheart, and he was one of those kind of youths who did not care who knew the state of his feelings, and when the "Liberty Boys" gave three cheers for Gertie, he was the proudest fellow in the world.

"Oh, Mr. Slater, wasn't it terrible—the battle?" exclaimed Amy Ford, addressing Dick.

"Well, it was rather so," he replied.

"Especially for the redcoats!" said Bob Estabrook, with a grin.

"It might have been bad for us," said Dick; "indeed, I may say that it would have been bad for us but for the warning given us by Miss Elmore. That saved us, and we owe her a thousand thanks."

"While I owe her a thousand kisses!" said Harry, with a laugh.

"Oh, say, don't you want some help in paying that debt, Harry?" grinned Bob Estabrook.

The other laughed good-naturedly. "I guess I can manage it without assistance, Bob," he replied; whereat Bob groaned.

"That's just my luck!" he murmured; "whenever I want to do something noble and generous-like, I am not given the opportunity. I do believe I shall stop being a philanthropist!"

The girls, Gertie and Amy, ran laughing into the house. "He's a funny fellow, isn't he?" said Amy, referring to Bob.

"Indeed, he is; and a good-looking fellow, too, Amy. Why don't you try to catch him?"

"Oh, I don't know," with a blush; "I don't suppose I could do so if I wanted to. Then, he won't be here long enough to fall in love with any one, you know. The 'Liberty Boys' are here, there any everywhere."

"Now what are you two girls talking about?" asked Mrs. Ford, who entered the room just at this moment.

"Oh, nothing, mother," was Amy's demure reply.

When the party of redcoats, with the three wagon-loads of wounded men and their ranks diminished by one-fourth, entered Charleston that evening, a sensation was the result. The news that they had been met and defeated by the party of stranger "rebels" quickly flew all over the city. And when it was learned that the party of "rebels" were "The Liberty Boys of '76," of whom nearly every one had heard, excitement rose to fever heat. Nothing else was talked of, anywhere, and in all the private houses, in the stores and on the streets, it was the absorbing topic of conversation.

Captain Thornley, of course, went straight to headquarters to report, but his men were besieged on every side by people who wished to learn all the particulars, and they told some stories of the encounter with the "Liberty Boys" which would have made Munchausen turn green with envy. But the stories were swallowed by the questioners and they came back again for still more.

Although Captain Thornley went to headquarters almost immediately after arriving at his own quarters, he found that the news of the defeat and rout of his party had preceded him. Some busybody had heard the news and risked breaking his neck in order to be the first to get to headquarters with it.

"What is this I hear, Thornley?" almost roared the commander, as the captain put in an appearance. "Is it possible? Can it be true that your party was defeated, nay, routed by the rebels, and that fifty or sixty of your men were killed?"

Captain Thornley bowed. "It is true," he replied; "though we lost only forty-one killed. Twenty-two were wounded, and we brought them in with us."

"Great guns! how did it happen?" asked the commander. "Didn't you succeed in surprising them?"

"No."

"How was it that you failed in this?"

"I don't know. They found out that we were coming—how, I cannot say."

"That was bad!"

"So it was; and they came much nearer to surprising us than we did them."

"Humph! Tell me all about it."

The captain did so, and the commander paced backward and forward, and gave utterance to exclamations of anger and horror.

"Bad! bad!" he said when the captain had finished. "Those 'Liberty Boys' must be dangerous opponents."

The captain nodded. "They certainly are!" he said.

The commander paced backward and forward across the floor for a minute or two, his hands clasped together behind his back, his eyes dropped. He was thinking deeply. Presently he paused and looked at his companion.

"Thornley," he said, "those 'Liberty Boys' must be punished!"

"I think so," the captain coincided.

"They must be wiped off the face of the earth!" The commander spoke fiercely, angrily.

Captain Thornley shook his head. "That is easier said than done," he remarked, quietly. "They are not the

kind of fellows who will permit themselves to be treated in that fashion."

"But if they can't help themselves?"

"But I think they can help themselves."

"You do?"

"Yes; I believe that we can send a sufficient number of men out there to enable us to get the better of them, but I don't believe it will be possible to annihilate them."

"Nevertheless it must be done, if possible, and I am going to send a force out there that will be sufficient for the purpose, if those 'Liberty Boys' dare to try to make stand and fight."

"I don't think there is much doubt on that score; they will make a stand and show fight, all right. And they'll make a good fight, too!"

"You seem to have a high opinion of them."

"I have reason."

The commander nodded. "I judge that is true," I agreed. "Nevertheless I——"

"A messenger from Cornwallis!" announced the order, at that moment, at the same time ushering in a man who looked as if he had just got in from a long and hard ride—as was really the case.

"You are from Cornwallis, you say?" asked the commander, with eagerness.

The messenger bowed. "I am, sir," was the reply; "and here is the message which General Cornwallis sent."

As he spoke he drew a folded paper from his pocket and handed it to the commander, who took it eagerly and tearing it open read hastily.

"What's this? What's this?" he exclaimed, when he had read it. "Cornwallis says that General Gates, the rebel who conquered Burgoyne is coming down to attack him at Camden, and he wants me to send at once every man I can spare from this garrison!"

"Say you so?" exclaimed Captain Thornley, in excitement. "Then it is likely there will be a great battle at Camden soon!"

"Yes, indeed! And, Thornley, I guess we shall have to postpone the chastising of those insolent 'Liberty Boys' until some more convenient time."

"Yes; we can't afford to waste any time with them now."

"No; when Cornwallis says he wants men at once I means at once, and not at some time that is convenient. You must begin getting ready for the trip immediately. As you go out, tell Colonel Melburn to come here at once. You know where to find him."

"Very well, sir," and the captain hastened out.

"Orderly!" called out the commander.

The orderly entered at once.

"Show this man to the kitchen and see to it that he has plenty to eat and drink. He must be hungry and thirsty."

"This way," said the orderly, and he led the way out of the room and to the kitchen.

They had scarcely gotten out of the room before Colonel Melburn entered. He saluted and said: "You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Colonel Melburn; I have work for you to do."

"What is it?"

"I have just received a message from Cornwallis at Camden, and he orders me to send all the men I can spare to him at once, as the rebel general, Gates, is coming down there to attack him with, I judge, a strong force."

"Indeed? That is news indeed!"

"So it is; and I wish you to take command of the force which I shall send."

"Good! I shall be glad to do so."

"I judged you would be."

"Yes; and now, how many men are you going to send?"

"I think I can spare five hundred."

"Very well; does it make any difference which men go?"

"No; take any men you choose."

"Very well; are there any further instructions?"

"None; except that you are to return here before you go, as I shall have a message for you to take to Cornwallis."

"Very well; I will be in again before we start."

Then the colonel took his departure to get the force ready to march at the earliest possible moment.

CHAPTER VI.

DISGUISED AS A DARKY.

Soon after the departure of the redcoats, with their wounded, Dick called Bob to one side and said: "I am going to Charleston, Bob."

"You are?" in surprise.

"Yes."

"When?"

"Right away; that is, as soon as I can disguise myself."

"Why are you going?"

"I want to learn, if possible, what the redcoats will try to do next."

"I see."

"It's this way, Bob: They have tried to take us by

surprise, and failed, and I think they will try some new scheme next time."

"Doubtless you are right."

"I am sure of it."

"It's a good scheme, Dick; and if you can find out what they intend to do it will enable us to checkmate them."

"So it will; we haven't a very large force, and we must make up in cunning what we lack in strength."

"Eke out the lion's skin with that of the fox, as the fellow says, eh?"

"Yes."

"Won't it be dangerous to venture into Charleston, to-night, old man?"

"Oh, there will be some danger, of course."

"I should think so; the people will be red-hot when the redcoats get there with the wounded men, and it is learned that we gave them such a hard blow."

"Yes, they will be pretty angry."

"It will be like a hornet's nest after a boy has poked a stick into it."

"Yes, they'll be buzzing a bit, no doubt."

"Buzzing is no name for it! They would like a chance to sock it to some fellow between the eyes; and if they should happen to find out that you were a patriot and a spy it would be all up with you."

"I know that; but I won't let them find it out."

"What sort of a disguise will you adopt?"

"I am going to black up and pass for a negro."

"That will be a good disguise."

"I think so."

"When will you start?"

"Just as soon as it is dark. I will go and black my face and hands now."

Dick went into the house and took some charred sticks out of the fireplace. Then he proceeded to black his face and hands, and as he had more than once done this sort of work, when acting as a spy, disguised as a negro, he soon had the work completed in a most satisfactory manner.

He went out, and, approaching the "Liberty Boys," who were eating their supper, said, in perfect imitation of a negro's tones: "Kin I hab er bite ter eet wid youse fellahs? Ah'm hungry ez er b'ar!"

The boys stared at him for a few moments, in amazement, and then Bob gave the snap away by bursting into a roar of laughter.

"You are all right, Dick!" he said. "I don't believe Sister Alice would know you—and that's saying it all. I guess you'll be safe in going into Charleston in that make-up."

"Oho, so it's you, Dick, is it?" remarked Sam Sanderson.

"Yes," replied Dick, laughingly; "I wished to test my disguise, and if you boys were puzzled while yet there is daylight, then I need not fear to enter Charleston after nightfall, where there is no one who knows me—at least so far as I know."

"Oho, I don't think there will be much danger," said Mark Morrison.

Dick ate his supper and then got his horse ready. As soon as it was dusk he mounted and rode away. He had left Bob in command, and had given him full instructions regarding what should be done.

Dick rode in the direction of Charleston at a gallop, and did not slacken speed until he was within half a mile of the edge of the city. Then he brought his horse down to a walk and advanced slowly and cautiously another quarter of a mile. Then he turned aside from the road and entered the timber. Dismounting, he led his horse back a distance of a hundred yards and tied him to a tree.

"There, I think no one will bother you, old fellow," said Dick as he turned away.

He made his way back almost to the road and then started toward the city. Presently he emerged from the timber, and, pausing, took an observation. It would be impossible to locate the sentinels until after he was close enough so that he himself would be seen, so he decided to trust to the disguise for safety, and to advance openly and boldly.

Stepping out into the middle of the road he walked toward the city. He had gone but a few yards when he was challenged:

"Who comes there?"

"A frien'," replied Dick.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

Of course, Dick did not know the countersign, but he advanced as boldly as if he did, and was soon within a few yards of the sentinel.

Here he paused and said: "I hain't got no countersign, boss; I se jes' er nigger whut is goin' inter de city ter git some medicin' foah mah ole massa, whut is sick'n. I didn't know ez how Ah'd need enny countersign. Whut is hit, ennyway, boss?"

"Oh, it's a nigger!" in a disgusted tone. "Hustle along, then, Charcoal, and get the medicine for your master. He may die while you are fooling around here."

"T'ank yo', boss; t'ank yo'! Ah'll go right on, sah, fah Ah'm in er big hurry, an' dat's de trufe."

Dick hastened onward, glad to get past so easily, and he was soon walking the streets of Charleston. On every

hand he encountered groups of men talking of the manner in which the party of British troopers had been routed by the "Liberty Boys." There were redcoats and citizens on the streets, and the latter were about as angry, seemingly, as were the redcoats themselves.

Dick made it a point to hear what was being said, for he thought that he would, sooner or later, hear something that would give him an idea of the next move that would be made by the enemy. He heard nothing of the kind, however; all the talk was of the "outrage," as they called it, but there was nothing said of what the redcoats intended doing next.

"Never mind," thought Dick, "I'll hear something pretty soon. They haven't had time to make any plans as yet."

He kept moving about, and presently found himself near the headquarters of the commander of the garrison at Charleston. He stood there looking at the building and wondering if he could, by any means, enter it without exciting suspicion, when a man on horseback dashed up, and, leaping to the ground, threw the reins to Dick, with the remark: "Hold my horse and I will give you a shilling."

"All right, sah," replied Dick, looking after the man with interest.

"That is a messenger," he said to himself; "he brings a message to the commander of this garrison, and I will wager that the message is from General Cornwallis. Jove, if I could only be there and hear what is said when the message is read!"

But there were a number of soldiers near the entrance to the building, and a couple of sentinels posted, one on each side of the doorway, and the youth knew it would be foolhardy to try to get past them as he would have no excuse to offer, and if he persisted and tried to get past he would, no doubt, be suspected of being a spy, and arrested, which would be fatal. No, he must wait and trust to good luck to learn what was in the wind later on.

He held the horse and waited for the owner to return, but it was more than half an hour before he did so. Then he drew a shilling from his pocket and tossed it to Dick—who, of course, he supposed to be a negro—and said: "Sorry I kept you waiting so long. I stopped to get a bite to eat, something very acceptable to a man who has ridden as far as I have in the last twelve hours."

"Does yo' come frum up in de Great Pedee Ribbere country, boss?" Dick asked. "Ah got some relashuns up dere."

"No, I came from the Catawba River country, farther to the west."

"Oh, dat's it?"

Dick was thinking rapidly. He knew that Camden was in the Catawba, and he knew that Cornwallis was at Camden, and he had no trouble in deciding that the messenger came from Cornwallis.

"I wish I knew what the message was that he brought," he said to himself; "well, I'll stay around here and listen and keep my eyes open, and I think that I will learn something presently."

He was right about that. He soon discovered that there was an unusual stir among the soldiers of the garrison, and he made it a point to hang around wherever there were some of them and listen to their conversation. By so doing he soon learned that a force to the number of five hundred was getting ready to leave Charleston, and presently he heard them say that they were going to Camden.

"I thought so," Dick said to himself; "I suspected it. There is going to be a big battle up there near Camden, between General Cornwallis and his army and General Gates and his army, and I wish that we could be there to take a hand."

Then a thought struck him: If such a large force was going away from Charleston there would not be a sufficient number left to do much damage in the vicinity, so why should not his party go up and take a hand in the battle?

Dick could see no reason why it should not, and he made up his mind that they would go and have a hand in the affair. Just then a soldier approached where the men were getting ready for the start, and Dick heard him say:

"That rebel spy, Dick Slater, who has been giving us so much trouble, is in the city! A loyal man has just come in from out in the country with the news. He says he young scoundrel is disguised as a negro!"

CHAPTER VII.

A GOOD DISGUISE.

Dick heard this with a feeling of consternation. "Jove!" he thought, "I will have to lookout or they will get me! They know I am in the city, disguised as a negro, and will put out strong guards to keep me from making my escape. What will be my best course of action?"

While asking himself the question Dick had moved

slowly and cautiously away. One of the redcoats happened to catch sight of him, however, and set up a shout.

"There's a negro!" he cried; "and I'll wager he is the man we want! Come on; let's give chase to him and see whether or not he is the spy!"

He darted toward Dick as he finished speaking, and the youth, knowing that it would not do to let the man lay hands on him, darted away and ran with all his might.

This, of course, made the redcoats think their comrade right in saying that the negro was the spy, and they set out in pursuit, yelling at the top of their voices:

"Stop, stop!"

"Head him off!"

"The spy! the spy!"

"Don't let him escape!"

Such were a few of the cries given utterance to, and Dick ran with all his might. He did not make any attempt to get out of the city on the side in the direction he would have to go to reach the camp of the "Liberty Boys." Instead, he merely turned his footsteps toward such portion of the city as was not lighted, in the hope that he might escape his pursuers in the darkness.

They were after him, hot-foot, however, and their cries were attracting attention. People in front saw Dick, and tried to head him off. He was forced to turn aside and run up an alley.

The chase grew hotter and hotter, and once Dick, as he emerged from an alley onto a street, was face to face with four redcoats.

"Here he is!" roared one. "Here is the spy!"

"Seize him!" from another.

"Go for him!" still another cried.

The four leaped forward, intent on seizing Dick, but he struck out straight from the shoulder and knocked two of them down. The other two seized him, but they found they had caught a Tartar. He struggled fiercely and soon succeeded in knocking one down and the other he got a peculiar twist on and threw over his head.

The redcoat alighted on his head and shoulders on the hard pavement and was knocked senseless; but the other two who had been first knocked down were now scrambling to their feet and Dick had no time to lose. He darted forward again and ran with all his might.

He had gone but a short distance when crack! crack! sounded the pistol shots and two bullets whistled past him. The redcoats, angered by being knocked down, and anxious for revenge, had fired upon the fleeing youth. Luckily they missed, but it was a close call.

Onward Dick raced. He realized that he was in great

danger, for the entire city was becoming aroused. The word had gone out that Dick Slater, the "rebel" spy, was in the city disguised as a negro, and everybody was on the lookout for him. No matter where the youth went he found somebody ready to give chase. Soon it seemed to him that there was an army on his track.

He ran on and on, however, and presently, on turning a corner he heard a voice call out: "This way—quick!"

In front, only a little ways distant, was a small cottage, and in the partially opened door stood a woman. It was she who had called to Dick. He leaped the low fence and ran to the door.

"Come in, quick!" the woman said, in eager, trembling tones; "hurry, before some one sees you!"

Dick leaped through the doorway and then the woman closed the door and barred it.

"Who are you, and why have you befriended me?" asked Dick.

"I am the wife of a patriot—one who is in Marion's band," was the reply; "and if I can be of aid to a patriot I shall not hesitate to render all the assistance possible."

"But you may get yourself into trouble," said Dick; "if the redcoats should learn that you have befriended me they would burn your house and put you in prison."

"I'll risk it; but listen! I hear footsteps and voices!"

The woman extinguished the light and stood silently listening, as did Dick also. They could hear the sound of voices very plainly, but the sound of footsteps had ceased.

"I don't see where he can have gone," they heard a voice say; "he couldn't have run the whole length of this block."

"Perhaps he has entered one of these houses?" suggested another voice.

"Likely you are right," was the reply.

"What shall we do—make a search of the houses?"

"I think that is the thing to do."

"I am sure it is. I have understood that there are several rebel families living here, and likely he has taken refuge with one of them."

"Well, let's begin with this one here."

"All right."

"They are coming to search the house!" whispered the woman, her voice trembling.

"Yes," replied Dick; "I must get away. Lead me to the back door, quick!"

"This way," and the woman seized Dick by the arm and led him across the room, through another doorway and into another room. At the back door she paused and whis-

pered: "It is too late! They are at the back of house!"

Sure enough, voices could be heard at the rear. Two stood silently there and listened. What should done? was the question which both asked themselves.

"Is there no place where I could hide with a reasonable chance of escaping discovery?" asked Dick, in a cautious whisper.

Just then there came a loud knock on the front door.

"Goodness! what shall we do?" the woman exclaimed in a whisper. Then, in answer to Dick's query, she said, "No, there is no place in the house that would afford you a safe hiding place. I don't know what you can do. I am afraid you will be captured!"

Suddenly a thought struck Dick, and he asked, eagerly, "Have you an old dress handy, lady? If so, let me have it and I will put it on and pass myself off for a colored woman servant."

"Yes, yes! I'll get it for you. Wait here just a moment."

Thump, thump, thump! The knocking was heard at the front door again, just then, and it was louder and more insistent than before.

The woman was gone but a few moments, and when she returned she handed Dick some clothing. It was not the first time Dick had donned women's attire, and although he had some difficulty in getting the dress on, in the darkness, he finally managed it and was buttoning it when there came the sound of loud thumping on the door, followed by the cry: "Open the door! Open up, here, or we'll break the door down!"

"Now you go to your room and I will go to the door and ask them what they want," whispered Dick.

And the woman said: "Very well."

Dick moved through to the front room, and waited for a few moments, unbarred the door and unlocked it, and opened it.

"Whut yo' want heah?" he asked, opening the door wide enough so that the men outside could see that he had on a dress, thus deceiving them into the belief that he was a colored domestic.

"We want to come in."

"Whut foah yo' wants to come in?"

"We want to search the house."

"Whut foah yo' wants ter s'arch de house?"

"We are looking for a rebel spy, and think that may have entered this house."

"Whut's dat! A rebel spy? Goodness gwacious! might all be murdered in our baids! Come in, massas,

look foah de spy! I hopes yo' fin's 'im, I does foah er fack!"

"Have you a candle handy, my good woman?" asked one of the redcoats.

"Yes, heah's er candle. Jes' wait till I lights it."

Dick had flint and steel in his pocket, and he quickly struck a light. He held the lighted candle in such a way that it did not show him off very well, and then asked them where they wished to look.

"Oh, we will look all through the house," was the reply; "is there a cellar?"

"No, dar hain't no cellar," the youth replied at a venture. He didn't know, but the house was such a small one that he thought it probable there was no cellar, and as he had to reply he risked it.

"Give me the candle," said the leader of the party; "we'll look through the rooms on the ground floor, and then go upstairs."

At this instant the door opened and the woman of the house entered the room. "What means this intrusion?" she asked, with an assumption of indignation, assumed to hide her agitation and fright.

"We are looking for a rebel spy," was the reply; "he must have entered some of the houses near here, and we are going to search till we find him. I am sorry to disturb you, but the spy in question is the noted rebel, Dick Slater, and it will be a big feather in our caps if we capture him."

"What is that you say! A rebel spy? Goodness! I hope he has not broken into my house! And if so I hope you will find him. Please make a thorough search for him!"

"That is just what we will do, lady, you may be sure of that!" Then the man led the way, his men following, and they made a thorough search of the room on the ground floor. Finding no one there they went upstairs and searched those rooms. Of course, they had no better success there, and came back downstairs.

"Did you find him?" asked the woman.

"No; I guess he didn't enter your house," was the reply.

Suddenly an exclamation escaped the lips of one of the men. "There must be a cellar under this house!" he cried. "Here is a trap door!"

The leader looked in the direction indicated and an exclamation escaped him. He whirled toward Dick, who began to think he was in for it, sure enough.

"What do you mean by lying to us, you black wench!"

the man cried. "Why did you say there was no cellar under the house?"

"I didn't know dere wuz enny cellar unner de house, massa," was the reply.

"Didn't know it?"

"No, sah; I done jes' come heah dis arternoon, ter work foah dis leddy, an' hedn't hed time ter look aroun', sah."

"But you said there was no cellar; you didn't say you didn't know."

"I t'ought dere wuzn't no cellah, massa. I wuz mis-took, dat's all."

"Well, we'll let it rest at that until after we have taken a look in the cellar; but if we find the spy there it will go hard with both of you!" this in a very threatening tone.

"Oh, we know nothing of any spy!" the woman insisted. "Eliza simply thought there was no cellar because the house is small, that is all."

"We'll soon see!"

The men went down into the cellar and looked everywhere for the "rebel" spy, but found no one, as a matter of course.

"There's no one down there," said the leader, "so I guess you folks are all right, after all."

"Oh, yes; we would not think of sheltering a rebel spy!" the woman declared, with apparent sincerity.

"Come, men; we will search more houses in this vicinity," the leader said. "I am sorry that we disturbed you, lady," with a bow to the woman of the house.

"Don't mention it," the woman replied; "you have to do your duty, of course."

The redcoats left the house and went to the next one. They pounded on the door, and while waiting for it to be opened one of the men said: "Say, captain, do you think that was a woman—the colored person back at the other house, I mean?"

"Why, of course. Why do you ask such a foolish question?"

"Well, I noticed her feet, and they seemed too large for a woman, and she had on heavy, rough shoes such as are worn by men."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; and her voice—did you think it sounded like the voice of a woman?"

"Well, come to think about it, it sounded a bit coarse."

"That's what I thought; say, it would be a joke if that was Dick Slater, the rebel spy, disguised as a woman, eh?"

A muttered curse escaped the lips of the captain. "If I thought that such was the case," he exclaimed, "I'd——"

Just then the door opened and a voice asked: "What's wanted here?"

"There's a rebel spy loose in this vicinity," was the captain's reply, "and we wish to search your house to see if he has taken refuge here."

"There's no rebel spy in this house!" The answer was decided, but the redcoats were not accustomed to taking any one's word for anything, and they insisted on entering and making search. The owner of the house grumbled, but finally struck a light and the redcoats went all through the house, looking for the spy. Of course, they were not successful, and finally excused themselves and emerged from the house in no very good humor.

"You might as well stop looking through any more houses," said the soldier who had suspected Dick; "I'll wager that that black woman back at the other house was no woman at all, but was Dick Slater in disguise!"

"I half believe that you may be right!" the captain coincided.

"I'd wager that I am. You know, he was blacked up like a negro, and it would have been an easy matter to don an old dress and pass himself off for a woman."

"You are right; and, by Jove! we'll go back and have a talk with that woman! That little matter about the cellar was suspicious, come to think about it. If she was a woman, and had been there even for a few hours, she ought to have been aware that there was a cellar under the house."

"You are right; and the fact that she didn't know, proves that she is Dick Slater, and had only been there a few minutes when we entered the house."

"Come!" said the captain; "we'll go back and have another interview with the colored woman!"

They hastened back and knocked on the door, and it was presently opened by the woman of the house. "We wish to see the colored woman Eliza," said the captain.

"She isn't here," was the reply.

The redcoats were surprised. "Isn't here?" the captain exclaimed.

"No."

"Where is she?"

"She went back to where she has been living."

"What did she do that for?" in a voice full of suspicion.

"She was frightened by you men, and said she would go back there for to-night and return in the morning."

"Where is the place you speak of—the place where she has been living?"

"I don't know, exactly. It is quite a ways, however."

"Madam," said the captain, sternly, "do you know what I think?"

"No," in a voice which trembled slightly; "what do you think?"

"That you have been harboring a rebel spy!"

"No, no! You are mistaken! Why should you think that? Did you not look through my house thoroughly?"

"Yes; but the spy was here, even then!"

"What do you mean?"

"That the supposed colored woman, Eliza, was the spy, Dick Slater!" "

The captain spoke sternly, but the woman denied that such was the case, and said that Eliza was a woman and that she knew nothing whatever regarding the spy Dick Slater. "I assure you, sir, that I am telling you only the truth!" the woman said.

"We will enter and see if you have told the truth about the woman not being here now," said the redcoat, and they entered and again searched the house, finding no one save the woman of the house.

"We have no time to lose here, now," said the captain sourly; "but I promise you, madam, that we shall not forget you, and I will see to it that your name is handed in to the commander of the garrison as being a dangerous and disloyal person, and he will investigate!"

"I am sorry you feel that way about it," the woman said; "I assure you that you are wronging me in suspecting me of disloyalty."

"That will be determined before very long," was the reply, and then the redcoats took their departure, angry and disappointed.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK GETS SAFELY OUT OF THE CITY.

Meanwhile what of Dick? He had shrewdly suspected that just what did happen might happen, and as soon as the redcoats had taken their departure, he had doffed the dress, and, pausing only long enough to thank the woman for her kindness, he stole out at the back door and made his way to the alley at the rear. He stole up the alley to the cross street and took an observation. There was nobody near and he decided to risk it, so he entered the street and walked rapidly along.

He saw a party of men in advance of him, and presently they stopped and started to come back in his direction.

Dick leaped a fence and concealed himself behind a screen of boards. The party was in search of him, as he learned from their conversation as they passed, but they had given up the search, and were returning to the main part of the city.

Waiting till they were out of hearing Dick left his place of concealment and leaping the fence continued onward up the street. He was now approaching the suburbs, and began to feel reasonably safe. There were no marching parties, that he could see, anywhere; and the only difficulty yet to be surmounted would be in getting through the picket lines, as he knew the sentinels had been doubled in number and instructed to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy.

Presently he reached the outskirts of the city and knew that he must look out for the sentinels. He moved slowly and very cautiously, and watched for some signs of the enemy.

Presently he caught sight of one of the sentinels. It was not a very clear night, and the moon was partially obscured, but the youth could make out the outlines of the sentinel, and he crept cautiously up to within a few yards of the path traversed by the sentinel in pacing his beat. Dick believed he would be able to slip across when the man was at the farthest point, and got ready to make the attempt. The sentinel moved slowly past and onward till he had almost reached the end of his beat, and then Dick suddenly rose and stole hastily across the path and darted away—but not without being seen, for there came a shout from the opposite direction from the way he had been looking, and then, crack! went a musket and a bullet whistled past Dick's head!

"That was a pretty good shot for the dark!" thought Dick; "but I think I am safe now."

"The spy!" yelled the redcoat who had fired the shot. "Yonder he goes! After him, everybody!"

Dick glanced back and saw shadowy forms in chase, and leaped away at his best speed. "I don't think they can catch me," he thought; "I'll show them a clean pair of heels, or my name isn't Dick Slater!"

It was a lively chase while it lasted, but it didn't last long. Dick was fleet of foot than his pursuers, and speedily distanced them, so they discharged their muskets in the hope that they might accidentally hit the fugitive, and then, seeing they had not, they abandoned the chase and went back.

Dick continued onward, gradually slackening speed until he got down to a walk. Then he walked rapidly onward till he reached the point where he had left the road, and

ties his horse. He penetrated into the timber a hundred yards and found his horse where he had been left. Untying the animal Dick led him out of the road, and, mounting, he galloped away down the road.

He rode onward a distance of perhaps a mile and then in rounding a bend in the road, came upon a band of Tories. There were about a dozen in the band and when they saw Dick they set up a shout.

"There he is!" one cried. "There is the rebel, Dick Slater! Go for him, boys!"

"Yes; he thinks he's mighty smart, blackin' himself up like a nigger, but he'll fin' thet he hain't!" from another.

Dick understood the matter. He had heard a redcoat in the city say that a Tory had brought the news that Dick Slater, in the guise of a negro, was in Charleston, and this was a party of Tories gotten together for the especial purpose of heading him off in case he succeeded in getting out of the city, and capturing or killing him.

But Dick did not intend that the Tories should accomplish their purpose. He did not give the men much time to think; but dashed straight toward them, and, drawing his pistols, fired two shots, dropping two of the fellows off their horses. He returned the two pistols to his belt and drew two more as quick as a flash, and fired these within ten feet of the men.

Two more went down, and the rest were seized with a panic. They were men who had not had much experience in warfare, and the action of the youth in dashing straight toward them instead of turning and trying to escape, as they had expected he would do, had so surprised them that they were incapable of doing anything at first. Now, however, they fired a few shots, but their horses were plunging about and none of the bullets came very near to the youth.

"Now I have you, you cowardly traitors!" cried Dick. "I'll kill the last one of you!" and seizing hold of a musket he wrenched it from the owner's grasp and using it for a weapon, he swung it about his head and knocked the Tories off their horses as if they were ten-pins.

They uttered wild yells of pain and terror, and the two or three who managed to escape being hit by the musket butt drove the spurs into the flanks of their horses and rode away as if the Old Nick was after them.

Dick did not pursue them, nor did he stop to fool away any more time with the ones he had knocked off their horses. He rode onward in the direction of Mr. Ford's home, chuckling as he thought of how he had got the better of the band of Tories who had expected to have such an easy time with him.

"I guess they will think twice before going for me again!" he said to himself; "unless, indeed, they have so many men that they know they can handle me."

As for those of the Tories who had not been killed, they picked themselves up and groaning went about catching their horses and picking up their muskets and hats.

"Thet feller is er demon, hain't he?" said one.

"He sartainly is!" another agreed.

"Blazes! but I b'leeve my skull is cracked! He hit me a turrible lick with the butt uv thet musket!"

"An' I got an awful clip alongside ther head!" from another.

"I wonder how et happens thet they didn't catch him in Charleston?" remarked another.

"I dunno; he got away, somehow."

Dick soon reached the "Liberty Boys'" encampment, and they questioned him eagerly.

"Well, are they going to come out and try to give us a blow?"

"What did you learn?"

"I suppose the redcoats are mad as hornets?"

"Did you have any trouble in getting into the city?"

Such were a few of the questions, and Dick quickly told what he had heard and seen in Charleston.

"So the majority of the soldiers of Charleston are going up to Camden to help Cornwallis, eh?" remarked Bob.

"Yes; they were getting ready to start when I left."

"Why can't we go up there, too, Dick, and help Gates?"

"That is just what we are going to do, Bob."

"Hurrah! That's the talk!"

"If the larger portion of the force at Charleston is going up to Camden, there is not much danger that the redcoats who are left will do much damage around here," said Mark Morrison.

"You are right, Mark; and for that reason we will leave this part of the country at once and go up there and take a hand in affairs."

"Will we go to-night?"

Dick pondered a few moments, and then said: "No, we will stay here to-night but we will start bright and early in the morning, and we can easily overtake the British infantry before to-morrow night, when, if we can possibly do so, we will give them a blow."

The "Liberty Boys" were well pleased by the prospects of some lively work in the near future, and laughed and talked and sang songs. Dick was careful to keep out guards, so as to avoid being taken by surprise, and he placed them on every side, for he knew from experience

that the enemy might come from the opposite direction from the one from which they might be expected to come.

Mr. Ford's folks had not yet gone to bed, and so Dick went to the house and acquainted them with his intentions. They told him they were sorry to see him and his band of "Liberty Boys" go, but that they realized that it was his duty to go to the assistance of General Gates.

"Yes," said Dick, "I have an idea he will need all the help he can get, and I don't think you people in the neighborhood will be in much danger for some time to come."

"I hope not," said Mrs. Ford.

"And so do I!" said Amy. There was a sober look on the girl's face, and she looked at Dick somewhat wistfully when she knew he was not noticing her. The truth was that although she had known Dick only a very short time, she had learned to think a great deal of him.

Dick remained in the house an hour or so, talking, and when he rose to leave he shook hands with the different members of the family, saying: "I think it likely we will be away in the morning before you folks are up, so we say good-by."

"Good-by, and success to you!" said Mr. Ford, and others said the same. There was an eager look on Harry's face, and presently he said: "Father and mother, let me go with Dick and the 'Liberty Boys,' won't you?"

His parents looked startled, and they hesitated; but it was evident that the idea struck Amy favorably. "I'll let him go, father and mother!" she said.

"What would Gertie say?" asked Mrs. Ford, looking at Harry.

"She would say for me to go, I am sure," replied the youth.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, I am sure of it. She would rather have a fellow for a sweetheart who is brave enough, and patriotic enough to wish to go and fight for his country, than to have one who would rather stay at home and take things easy, I am confident."

"Maybe so."

"I think as Harry does, mother," said Amy. "A girl would love her sweetheart all the more on account of his being brave and patriotic."

"But I can see what she herself says about it," said Harry; "I wouldn't think of going without seeing her, you know; and if you consent to my going, father and mother, I will go right over and see Gertie."

"Oh, well, so far as I am concerned you may go, Harry."

aid his father; "but will you return home as soon as
the battle at Camden is over?" "

"If you say so; but I would prefer to stay with
Dick and the 'Liberty Boys' as long as they remain in the
outh."

"You may do as you like, Harry."

"And what do you say, mother?"

"Since your father is willing I shall not withhold my
consent, Harry," was the reply.

"Good for you, mother, dear!" and then giving his
mother a kiss, Harry left the house and hastened down
the road in the direction of the home of Gertie Elmore.

Her home was about a mile and a half distant, and
Harry walked it in less than half an hour. The family
had retired, but Harry was not at all daunted. He knock-
ed on the door, and when he heard footsteps inside the
house he called out: "It is I, Harry Ford, Mr. Elmore."

"Ha! is it you, Harry?" was the exclamation from
within. "Any of the folks sick? Anything happened?"

"No," the youth replied. "I am going away early in
the morning and I wished to see Gertie and tell her
about it."

There was the sound of bolts being withdrawn and then
the door opened. "Going away, Harry?" the man asked.
"Where are you going?"

"I'm going up near Camden with the 'Liberty Boys.'"
"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes; there's going to be a battle up there and the
Liberty Boys' want to be in it, and I am going with them."

"Good for you, Harry! But I am afraid that the red-
coats from Charleston will come out here and do a lot of
damage as soon as you are gone."

"I don't think so; the majority of the redcoats have left
Charleston and are on their way to Camden to join Corn-
wallis, and the rest will likely behave themselves."

"I hope so; well, go into the front room, there, Harry,
and I will go up and tell Gertie you are here. She'll be
down just as soon as she can get dressed."

Harry went into the room and seated himself, and five
minutes later Gertie appeared, bringing a candle with her.
She leaped into Harry's arms, with a little cry. "Father
tells me you are going away to the war!" she breathed.
"Oh, Harry, I'm glad and I'm sorry, too, for—what if
you should be killed?"

"I shall have to take the chances of that, Gertie, the
same as all soldiers do," said Harry, kissing the beautiful
girl tenderly.

"Do you really think there will be a battle, Harry?"

"Dick Slater thinks so, and I guess he knows pretty
well."

"And you will be in it! Oh, Harry, it seems hard to
think that you must be exposed in such a manner!"

"Oh, I'll come back again, safe and sound, Gertie!"
said the youth.

"Oh, I hope so, Harry!"

"I will, little sweetheart! Never you fear. Don't fret
for a moment."

"I won't worry any more than I can help, of course;
but I won't be able to keep from worrying some."

Harry stayed an hour, and then kissed his sweetheart
tenderly, and bade her good-by; and as he was getting
ready to leave, Mr. and Mrs. Elmore came downstairs and
shook his hand and told him good-by, and wished him luck.

Then he took his departure and hastened back to his
home and went to bed, for he knew that he would need
all the rest he could get.

CHAPTER IX.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" JOIN GATES' ARMY.

The "Liberty Boys" were up and away next morning
before sunup, and Harry went with them. He was per-
haps the happiest one of all, for it was a new experience
to him—to be riding away, a member of a party of soldiers
on his way to fight for the liberty and independence of
the people of America.

Dick sent Bob Estabrook and Mark Morrison ahead as
scouts, to keep watch for the British, as he did not wish
to run onto them suddenly. His intention was to locate
them and keep a couple of miles behind them and then
attack them at night.

Of course, his force being not one-fourth as large as
that of the British, all he could do would be to make a
sudden attack, and then get out of the way quickly, but
in doing this he thought it possible that quite a good many
of the redcoats could be disposed of and placed in a position
where they would be unable to render Cornwallis aid.

At noon, when they stopped to eat their dinner, Bob and
Mark rode into camp and brought the information that
the force of redcoats was only two miles ahead and was
in camp, taking its noonday meal and rest.

"Then we will have to go slowly the rest of the day,"
said Dick; "indeed, I don't know that we had better move
any farther until nearly nightfall, for we can speedily catch
up with the enemy."

"Yes," agreed Bob; "they won't be able to march more

than twelve or fifteen miles, and we can ride that in a couple of hours."

"So we can; and I guess we might as well remain right here till after supper-time."

This plan was followed out, and Bob and Mark put in the afternoon, keeping watch on the British; they came into camp about five o'clock and told Dick that there would be no difficulty in locating the redcoats, when it was desired to do so.

After supper the "Liberty Boys" mounted and rode away. They rode two hours at a good pace, and then the main party came to a stop, while Dick and Bob went ahead to investigate and locate the camp of the redcoats. They kept a sharp lookout and presently caught sight of the light made by camp-fires. "There is the camp," said Bob; "we had better dismount and go ahead afoot, don't you think?"

"That will be the safest plan, Bob."

Dismounting they tied their horses and stole forward. They were soon where they could see the encampment, and after some careful manœuvring they located the sentinels. They discovered that there were only three or four sentinels out. Evidently the redcoats did not suspect that they were in danger. This would make it easier for the "Liberty Boys" to strike a blow, and Dick and Bob returned to where they had left their comrades, feeling well pleased with the situation.

It was decided to stay where they were until eleven o'clock, at least, as they would then have a better chance to strike the British a severe blow, and this was done. When the time came they rode forward to the point where Dick and Bob had dismounted, and here all dismounted and tied their horses. Then they stole forward.

They were soon near the encampment of the British and crept up to within range of the men lying all around, rolled up in blankets. They had been given their instructions by Dick, and knew just what to do. At last they were ready, and, muskets in hands and leveled, were awaiting the signal from Dick, when of a sudden a sheet of flame burst forth from the timber at the farther side of the encampment, and with wild yells of terror and anger the redcoats leaped up and seized their muskets—that is to say, the majority did. There were a dozen at least who did not get up. They had been rendered hors du combat by the volley from the unknown foe.

Of course, the "Liberty Boys" were greatly surprised; for they had not suspected that any other party was abroad at this time of the night, but they understood that the strangers, whoever they might be, must be friends, since

they had fired a deadly volley into the ranks of the British, and, not to be outdone, they took quick aim, and at the word from Dick, poured a volley into the midst of the redcoats.

This came so unexpectedly to the British that they were thrown into worse confusion than ever, and for a few moments they seemed to hardly know what to do. Their commander, Colonel Melburn, came rushing out of his tent and shouted to them to fire a volley, which order they obeyed.

"Now, charge the scoundrels!" roared the colonel, but at this instant the "Liberty Boys" and the party at the farther side of the encampment fired a volley and for a few moments the redcoats hesitated. They did not know how great a force they might have to contend with.

"Charge!" roared the colonel. "Charge, I say, and drive the rebels down!"

He himself led the force toward the side on which the "Liberty Boys" were, and giving them one more volley, Dick and his comrades took refuge in flight, for they could not hope to withstand the onslaught of three hundred soldiers. Another volley had come from the opposite side of the encampment, and the rest of the redcoats rushed in that direction.

The redcoats were very angry, now, and they gave utterance to wild yells and curses as they rushed in among the trees from whence had come the death-dealing volleys, and great was their disappointment when they encountered no resistance. The enemy had flown.

The British, bold, now ran far out into the timber and made a thorough search for their enemy, but failed. Nowhere could they find any traces of the audacious "rebels" who had crept up and dealt them such a severe blow and then fled.

The blow had been rather severe, sure enough, for twenty-two of the British had been killed and seventeen wounded. As a matter of course, the redcoats were eager to get revenge, and scouts were sent out to see if the identity and location of the enemy could be discovered. The scouts were not very skilled, however, and they were unsuccessful in their search. It may be that they were afraid to venture very far into the depths of the timber, for fear they would meet with death at the hands of the unseen and unknown enemy; be that as it may they did not locate the "rebels" and were forced to return and so report.

Colonel Melburn was very angry and threatened what he would do if he was so fortunate as to lay eyes on the enemy. "I will wipe them off the face of the earth!" he declared, fiercely.

He placed out strong guards or sentinels and said he could see to it that they were not surprised a second time. I had no idea there were any rebels in the neighborhood," said.

Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" retreated to where they had left their horses, and, mounting, rode back a mile and went into camp. As he expected, they had not been in camp thirty minutes before the sentinel on the north side of the encampment was hailed and a few moments later the "Swamp Fox" and his men rode into view.

I say Dick Slater had expected that somebody would show up, as the fact that the redcoats had been attacked by another party proved that there were others in the neighborhood who were patriots, but he did not expect to see the "Swamp Fox."

"I thought that you went up to Camden to offer your services to General Gates!" exclaimed Dick, as he shook hands with Marion.

"So I did," was the reply.

"What was the trouble? Couldn't you find him?"

"Oh, yes, I found him."

"What's the trouble, then? Isn't he going to give Cornwallis a battle, after all?"

"Yes, he is going to attack Cornwallis, he says."

"Then why didn't you stay with him? But, of course, you have something else of more importance to do or you couldn't be here."

There was a gloomy look on the face of the "Swamp Fox," as Dick could see by the faint light of the moon, he not having had any camp-fires built. "I am doing what can for the good of the great cause," said Marion; "I have just struck the British a blow, as you know, for you were there and struck them at the same time, but I didn't stay with Gates for the reason that he didn't want me to."

"Didn't want you to?"

Dick was amazed; and no wonder, for Marion and his men had a reputation as fighters and brave men second to none in America.

"No; he told me he didn't care to accept of my services."

"Why not?"

"He said he didn't think we could do him any good. The trouble was, Dick, so far as I could make out, we were rough and uncouth-looking, had no uniforms and did not look like warriors."

Dick gave utterance to an exclamation indicative of disgust. "The man must be a fool!" he cried. "I don't see if he is a general; a man who doesn't know better than rate the fighting abilities of men by the style and cut

of their clothes, doesn't know enough to be a great general, and I don't understand how it was that he conquered Burgoyne at Saratoga."

"He wouldn't have done so but for Arnold and his other officers," said Marion; "at least that is my opinion. He seems to be a very bigoted, important-feeling man, and thinks he knows it all; but I fear he has a hard lesson ahead of him."

"I have no doubt that he will be given a lesson when he meets Cornwallis," agreed Dick; "I wouldn't care, so far as he is concerned, but think of the hundreds of patriot soldiers who will have to suffer as a result."

"It is bad," said the "Swamp Fox." "I talked to him for two hours and told him that I thought I and my men could be of benefit to him, but he looked upon us with scorn and would have none of us."

"Well, that beats anything I ever heard of!" said Dick. "I would not have believed a man, and a general, too, could have acted in such a foolish manner."

"Maybe he won't have anything to do with us, either, Dick!" said Bob Estabrook. "We haven't any uniforms, you know, and look more or less travel-stained and worn."

"Very well; if he wants it that way we will try and stand it. I hope he won't be so foolish as to refuse to let us help him, however."

"If he is, I'll tell him what I think of him!" declared Bob.

"And be court--martialed!" laughed Dick. "No, if he refuses to let us help him we will make the best of it, as General Marion, here, has done."

"Well, from all I could learn, he will need all the help he can get," said the "Swamp Fox." "Cornwallis has a strong force, and knows the country better than Gates does, and consequently he will, in all likelihood, succeed in outgeneraling him in some way."

"Do you think the clash will come very soon?" asked Dick.

"Not for several days. You will have time enough to reach the scene before the two forces come together. Gates is still four days' march from Camden."

"Which do you think I had better do—stay in the vicinity of this force that we struck to-night, and keep on striking them blows, or go straight on to Camden and meet General Gates?"

"I hardly know; though I think it will perhaps be as well to go on, for this force will be on the lookout and it will be a difficult matter to strike them another blow."

"True; they will keep out a sufficient number of sentinels to make another surprise impossible."

"Yes, they will be on the lookout to prevent a repetition of to-night's experience."

The two parties remained in the same encampment that night, but early in the morning were up and stirring, and after a frugal breakfast, bade good-by to each other, and while the "Swamp Fox" and his men continued on in a southern direction, Dick and his "Liberty Boys" rode northward. They made a detour to get around the British force, and then galloped onward at a lively clip.

They rode northward all day, pausing only at noon for a bite to eat for themselves and their horses, and at night went into camp within twenty-five miles of Camden.

Next day they continued their journey, and leaving Camden at their left rode on still farther northward. Along toward evening Dick sent out three or four scouts to the right and to the left, with instructions to look out for Gates and his army, and try to locate them. Just as they were getting ready to eat supper, after having gone into camp at sundown, one of the scouts came in and reported that the patriot army was only about two miles away to the northeast, and that it was in camp there.

"Very good," said Dick; "we'll ride over there after supper and find out whether or not General Gates will let us help him."

After supper the youths remounted and rode over to where the patriot soldiers were encamped. They were challenged and rode forward with the announcement that they were patriots and friends. "We are 'The Liberty Boys of '76,'" explained Dick; "I am Dick Slater, and I wish to have an audience with General Gates at the earliest possible moment."

The officer of the guard was sent for and he conducted the party into the encampment, the youths tying their horses just outside. The appearance of the youths attracted considerable attention, and when it became known who they were—as it very quickly did—there was a hum of interest and astonishment from the soldiers.

The officer of the guard conducted Dick to the tent occupied by Gates, and then calling the orderly out, told him to tell the general that Dick Slater, the captain of "The Liberty Boys of '76," wished to see him.

The orderly stepped back into the tent, and the hum of voices was heard for a few moments, and then he reappeared and said the general would see Dick Slater. Dick at once entered and found General Gates seated at a little, portable desk, writing. He looked up and eyed Dick critically, after which he motioned toward a camp-stool and said: "Be seated. Pray what can I do for you, Mr. Slater?"

It was Dick's private opinion that the question should have been reversed and changed to "What can you do for me?" but he did not say so. Instead he said, very courteously: "I have come here, General Gates, to offer the services of myself and my 'Liberty Boys' in the battle which will come as soon as you reach Camden."

"There won't be much of a battle," was the somewhat arrogant reply; "when we get within striking distance of the British we will make short work of them."

"I certainly hope so, sir; and I wish to be present and help make short work of them." To himself Dick said: "He is very egotistic. I fear he will get a setback when he reaches Camden. If he thinks he is going to have an easy time defeating Cornwallis he is mistaken."

General Gates pondered a few moments. "Where are your men?" he then asked.

"They are here in the camp."

"You just arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

Again the general was silent, and Dick thought that it was doubtful whether or not he and his comrades would get to take part in the battle with the British. At last the general said: "I am busy now, but will think the matter over. You may remain in the camp, to-night."

"Thank you," said Dick, and, had the general but known it, there was sarcasm in the utterance.

"He talks and acts as if it was a favor to us to let us stay in camp over night," thought Dick; "well, that is a new experience, anyway, to be treated in this fashion."

"I will see you in the morning," said Gates; "good night."

"Good night," replied Dick, and, saluting, he withdrew.

He went back to where the "Liberty Boys" were standing, and told them that they would go into camp for the night. The youths at once made their simple arrangements, and when this was done Dick told them what the general had said.

"So he wants time to consider whether or not to let us go with him and fight the enemy, does he?" remarked Bob, in fine scorn. "Say, he is a great one, isn't he?"

"Just as like as not he'll turn us adrift the same as he did Marion and his men," said Mark Morrison.

"I hardly think he will do that," said Dick; "he knows of us, and he may not have been familiar with the record of the 'Swamp Fox' and his men."

"Well, he ought to have been familiar with Marion's record," said Bob; "no one has a better one."

"That is certainly true," agreed Dick.

Some of the patriot soldiers came over to where the

youths were, and entered into conversation with them; and it did not take the youths long to find out that there were plenty of the men who did not fancy General Gates, or his way of doing things.

They spoke of the refusal of the general to allow Marion and his men to assist him. "It was a very foolish move, I think," said one; "for Marion has the reputation of being a wonderfully shrewd man, and as a fighter second to none, while he knows this country round about here like a book."

"You are right," agreed Dick; "in my opinion it was very unwise not to accept the assistance of Marion and his men. They are ill-kempt and ragged, but they are shrewd, and are demons to fight. We boys know that, for we have been engaged in more than one fight with the British, with the 'Swamp Fox' as our assistant, and I have yet to see any one I would rather have back me up in a fight than Marion."

"The trouble with Gates," said one of the men, frankly, "is that he thinks he knows it all."

"And there is danger that he may wake up some fine morning and find that he is mistaken," said Bob Estabrook, drily.

"You are right about that, my boy," was the reply.

Next morning General Gates sent for Dick, and with an air of condescension told him that he had decided that the "Liberty Boys" might remain with the patriot army.

"I know of you, and am aware that you are good fighters," he said; "not that I think I will need you, but by having more men and good fighters, I will be able the quicker to end the matter when I encounter the British."

"Thank you," said Dick.

He exchanged a few more words with Gates and then saluted and withdrew. Returning to where he had left his men, Dick informed them of the result of the interview.

"Then we are to stay with the army and take a hand in the fight, after all, eh?" remarked Bob.

"Yes," was the reply.

The march toward Camden was resumed, and as the roads were in bad condition no great headway was made, fifteen miles representing the distance traveled by the troops. They paused early in the evening, however, for it was Gates' intention to push on that night and try to reach Camden and surprise the British before morning.

The army remained where it was and rested for about three hours, and then the order was given to break camp and resume the march. There was no reason why Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" should not have gone on in advance, on horseback, and scouted and made sure the

way was clear, but Gates would not hear to anything of the kind. He didn't want the enemy to be alarmed, he said, and he made the youths ride at the rear of the army, much to their disgust.

The march was kept up till about three o'clock in the morning when, at a point five miles from Camden the advance guard of Gates' army encountered the advance guard of the British, and a skirmish ensued. It is rather remarkable, but both generals had made up their minds to surprise each other that night, and both armies were on the move and met, as we have stated, at a point five miles from Camden.

The skirmish was short and sharp, but the patriots were routed and their commander, Colonel Porterfield, was killed. This put a stop to the advance and Gates, astonished to have met with such an obstruction and reverse, called a council. He was puzzled by the situation, and hardly knew what to do, though he would not have acknowledged this. While the men lay on their arms in the darkness, ready to up and do battle at a moment's notice, the officers held their consultation.

General Kalb was for returning to Clermont, distant about four miles, and taking up as strong a position as possible there, but the rest were opposed to this course. They thought it best to remain where they were and fight it out. There was one very disquieting thought to Gates, and that was the fact that Cornwallis was in personal command of the army in front. This had been learned from some prisoners who had been captured in the skirmish, and these same prisoners said that Cornwallis had three thousand men. Dick and General Marion had understood, all the time, that Cornwallis was at Camden, but Gates had refused to believe it and thought that he was opposed to Lord Rawdon only, whose generalship he held in contempt. But Cornwallis was a man who knew his business, and Gates recognized this fact and realized that he would have some hard work to do in the morning if they stood their ground and fought the British.

Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" were disgusted. "If he had permitted us to go in advance and do some scouting, he would not have been surprised," said Bob Estabrook. "I guess he will begin to realize that he doesn't know it all, pretty soon."

CHAPTER X.

A TERRIBLE DEFEAT.

When the sun rose it showed the two armies close together. On both sides of the road were swamps which made it impossible for the armies to spread out much.

It had been decided to attack the British right flank, and here again Gates showed lamentable lack of generalship. For this important task, the success or failure of which, as the initial part of the combat, would practically determine the success or failure of the patriots in the battle as a whole, was intrusted to the raw militia from North Carolina and Virginia, while the regulars from Maryland, the old veterans who had been through many a bloody battle, and were not afraid of the Old Nick himself, were placed over on the right flank, and had to wait for the combat to become general before taking a hand. They should have made the attack, and had they done so the result of the battle of Camden—which was a total defeat and terrible rout for the patriot army—might have been different.

Presently the battle began. The North Carolina and Virginia militia began the advance, but were so ignorant of field manœuvres that they got all tangled up, seeing which the British right flank advanced in a bayonet charge. Being disciplined troops, they did not become tangled up, but came down upon the luckless militia like an avalanche, and the poor fellows are not to be blamed if they did not stand their ground. They broke and fled, followed by Tarleton and his fierce band of butchers, who cut down men by the scores, the militia running blindly, and presenting the best possible marks for the swords of the merciless cavalrymen.

An attack was now made on the Maryland brigades, and the affair speedily took on the appearance of a battle. The Maryland and Delaware regiments were veterans and fighters such as the British had seldom encountered. Led by the giant and lion-hearted Kalb, they fought like fiends and kept the entire British force busy. They were aided materially by the "Liberty Boys." Dick had, early in the engagement, stationed his men half way up a hillside where they could overlook the field and yet be within range of the point where the real battle was to be fought.

The contest waged fiercer and fiercer. It was one of the most desperate battles the "Liberty Boys" had ever been engaged in. Stationed behind rocks half way up the slope, they did deadly work, and were of material assistance to the Maryland troops, the first brigade of which was slowly pushed off the field after a desperate resistance. The second Maryland brigade was enabled to stand its ground, and twice repelled the terrible assaults of the British under Rawdon, and then went at them in a desperate and spirited bayonet charge and tore its way through the British. It held its new position till the end of the battle, which ended virtually with the death of the brave Baron Kalb, who fell after having received eleven wounds.

The battle was over and the second Maryland brigade left the field, slowly and in good order, and passing in a westerly direction, between a hill and the swamp, made their escape.

It was now time for the "Liberty Boys" to be moving. They had done splendid work, and as they could do no more alone and unaided, Dick gave the signal for the retreat. They hastened down the slope and to where their horses had been left, and, mounting, rode around in a westerly direction and joined the second Maryland brigade and accompanied it on the retreat.

Meanwhile, where was General Gates? He had been caught in the midst of the frightened and fleeing militia at the beginning of the battle and was carried back as far as Clermont. Realizing that the battle was lost, Gates procured a fresh horse and started for Hillsborough, which, being the seat of government for the State, would be the best place from which to organize another army. He reached Hillsborough, four days later, faint, weary, his uniform a mass of dirt and badly worn, and he looked at that moment as disreputable as any man in the band of the "Swamp Fox," which men he only a short time before refused to accept the assistance of because they did not present a neat appearance. Had Gates accepted the assistance of Marion and his men, and used them as they should have been used in permitting them to act as scouts, etc., the disaster which had befallen him would not have occurred, for he would not have been taken unawares by the British, as he had been through meeting them unexpectedly in the road north of Camden. But he was punished for his headstrong way of doing things, and for his egotism; for the terrible affair of Camden practically killed him as a general, taking away all the prestige he had acquired at Saratoga. He did not cut any particular figure during the rest of the war. He was ridiculed and made fun of by the people to such an extent as to almost drive him mad, and the fact that it was deserved did not lessen the sting—though it is doubtful if he ever believed that he had not done the best that could have been done.

Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys" and the remnant of the Maryland brigades retreated all the rest of the day, and then went into camp. There had not been much time for conversation, but now the soldiers gathered in groups and discussed the terrible affair freely.

"It was a badly managed affair," said one stalwart soldier. "Gates showed no judgment whatever in setting the militia onto the redcoats. Anybody—but him—would know better than to put men who had never smelt powder against trained veterans like the British soldiers!"

"The worst of it was that nobody ever dared say a word to Gates," said another; "even Kalb and the other officers got so they would not make any suggestions, for every time they did it they were insulted."

"Poor Kalb!" sighed one of the men. "He was a good-hearted man, and as brave a soldier as ever stepped foot on a battlefield. But he's gone. I saw him fall, and he was wounded in a dozen places, so it seemed to me."

"I wonder if they captured Gates?" remarked another.

"I hope they did!" said Bob Estabrook. "But I would wager a good deal that they didn't. I have always noticed that the person or persons who are to blame for a thing usually escape, and some innocent parties have to bear the brunt of the trouble—or, at any rate, that is the way it has impressed me."

"There does seem to be something in what you say, my boy," said another of the soldiers; "I, too, doubt their having captured Gates, for he was well in the rear of the army and was well mounted. I don't think they could have caught him—unless his horse was wounded."

"Say, those British dragoons were demons!", remarked another. "I watched them as well as I could, and the way they hacked and cut those poor fellows down was a sin and a shame!"

"How many men do you suppose we lost?" asked a Marylander.

"Hard to tell," was the reply; "we have lost half our men, and the other part of our force lost a good deal more than half."

It may be as well to state here that while the exact number of patriot soldiers killed was never ascertained, it has been estimated at about one thousand, while one thousand more were taken prisoners and seven pieces of artillery and two thousand muskets fell to the British as a result of their victory. The British loss in killed and wounded was only three hundred and twenty-four. It is easy to see, therefore, that the battle of Camden was a terrible defeat, a terrible disaster, in fact.

Next morning the retreat was resumed, and the Great Pedee River was reached the same day, about five o'clock in the evening. From a patriot farmer who lived near a ford of the Pedee it was learned that General Gates had passed that way, and he had left a message for all soldiers

who came along to follow and rejoin him at Hillsborough. The patriot soldiers grumbled some, and said that they would rather go it alone than to again trust themselves under the command of Gates, but they were in duty bound to obey orders, and next morning got ready to start for Hillsborough.

"Are you going with us?" asked one of the soldiers of Dick. They had all taken a great liking to the "Liberty Boys," and would have been glad to have the youths remain with them. But such was not Dick's intention.

"No, I don't think we will go to Hillsborough," Dick replied. "I am not under the orders of Gates, and I believe that I have had all of him that I want."

"I don't blame you," was the reply; "we wouldn't join him if we didn't have to."

"But what will you boys do?" asked another.

"We will go farther south and do what we can to protect the patriot families of South Carolina. We were sent down here on a roving commission, to go and come as we pleased, and make things as lively as possible for the British, and I guess there will be plenty of work now that the redcoats have triumphed so signally, and practically wiped out the entire patriot army of the South."

"You are right about that. They will be mighty saucy now, and it will go hard for people who are known to be patriots."

When the soldiers were ready to march away the "Liberty Boys" mounted their horses and rode away toward the south, and as they turned in their saddles, at the top of a rise, and waved their hats, a cheer came to their ears.

"Those are fine fellows, Dick," said Bob as they rode down the slope.

"Yes, Bob; and it was a shame the way they were led into an affair that resulted in so many losing their lives."

"So it was."

Dick was in no hurry to return to the North, and had decided to go back down in the vicinity of Charleston, as he feared there would be considerable damage done by the redcoats around there as soon as the news of the defeat and rout of the patriot army reached them.

They rode southward steadily for two days, and toward evening of the second day they encountered General Marion and his band. The "Swamp Fox" was eager for news

of the battle at Camden, and when Dick told him how it had turned out a groan went up from the brave man, and from his men as well.

"I feared it!" he said hoarsely. "I was afraid that was the way it would turn out. Well, it can't be helped now, but it is a lamentable affair, a lamentable affair!"

The two parties camped together that night, but parted and each went its way next morning, and about noon Dick and the "Liberty Boys" reached the home of the Fords.

Their coming took the good people by surprise, but they were welcomed most heartily; the grief of the patriots was

great when they learned the result of the battle of Camden, but they were glad to see their son Harry back again alive. He stopped only long enough to greet his parents and sister, and then galloped on over to the home of the Elmores, to see his sweetheart, Gertie, who received him in a manner that was satisfactory to him, for she was a girl who could kiss as well as be kissed.

The "Liberty Boys" remained in the South some time longer, and were here, there and everywhere. They had some very lively times, indeed, and they succeeded in making it quite lively for the redcoats, too.

THE END.

The next number (64) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' 'LONE HAND'; OR, FIGHTING AGAINST GREAT ODDS," by Harry Moore.

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